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# ULTRAVERSE®

# MANTRA®

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MANTRA
The COMING of THE INQUISITORS
THE ARCHIMAGE QUEST -- CHAPTER 1
YOU WILL BE SILENT, EDGAR STRAUSS. YOU WILL SPEAK ONLY WHEN GIVEN PERMISSION.
IGNORE THEM, MR. STRAUSS. YOU WILL DEAL WITH ME.
MAN, WILL YOU CHILL, SILAS? YOU'LL SCARE HIM INTO HIS NEXT LIFE!
MIKE W. BARR - WRITER
ROBB PHIPPS - PENCILLER
ANDREW PEPOY - INKER
PATRICK OWSLEY - LETTERER
TIM DIVAR - COLOR DESIGN
VIOLENT HUES - INTERIOR COLOR
CHRIS ULM - EDITOR

"IGNORE THEM," MORDECAI? HIM, PERHAPS, BUT--
MAN, YOU GUYS ARE JUST SO REGIMENTED--
ONE'S INSTRUCTIONS STAND, MR. STRAUSS.
...PLEASE, BE SEATED.
I'LL NOT BE DICTATED TO IN MY OWN OFFICE! IN FACT--
--I'LL BE THE ONE WHO GIVES THE ORDERS!
A SERAPHIC SHIELD, HOW QUAINT...
AGGGGH--!
...ONE SEES THOSE ONLY IN MUSEUMS!
MR. STRAUSS--!

BEGONE!
YOU'RE... YOU'RE MONSTERS!
YOU ARE SO JUDGMENTAL...!
AGGGGHHH!
THERE ARE NO "STANDARDS"...
...THERE'S NO "REALITY"...
4

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THERE--!
THE WOMAN I SAW WHEN I WAS ON THE MOON...!
BUT WHO--?
YOU KNOW, MANTRA! THINK!
WHO ARE YOU?
BREEEEP
7:00
=ohhhh=
THAT DREAM AGAIN... WHY DOES IT KEEP REPEATING...?

STILL, IT'S NOT MUCH WORSE THAN MY LIFE, WHICH IS A NIGHTMARE. I'M A WARRIOR, I SHOULD BE FIGHTING THE FOES OF ARCHIMAGE WITH BROADSWORD AND MACE...

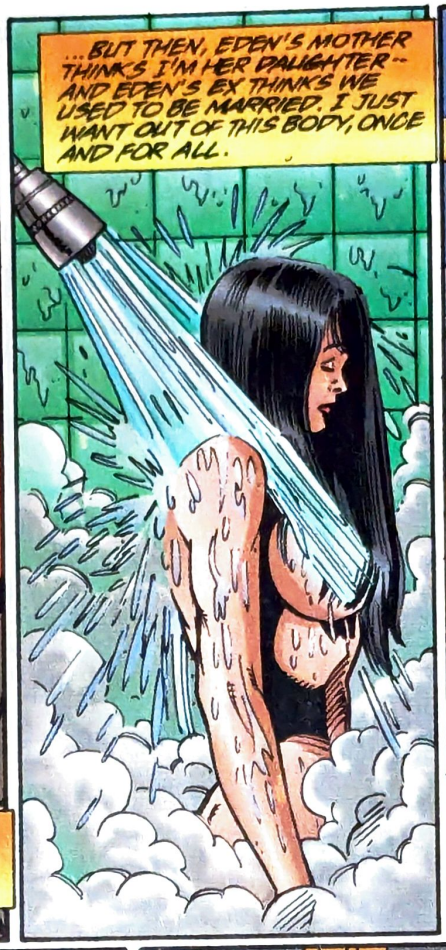
...INSTEAD, I WAS REINCARNATED AS A WOMAN – EDEN BLAKE, A HOUSEWIFE...
COME ON, EVIE, RISE AND SHINE.
YAWWN G'MORNING, MOMMY.

...WORSE, A HOUSEWIFE WITH KIDS!
I'M SICK, MOM!
YEAH-- SICK OF SCHOOL! LET'S GO!
THAT WAS AN OLD ONE WHEN I WAS A BOY, FIFTEEN CENTURIES AGO!

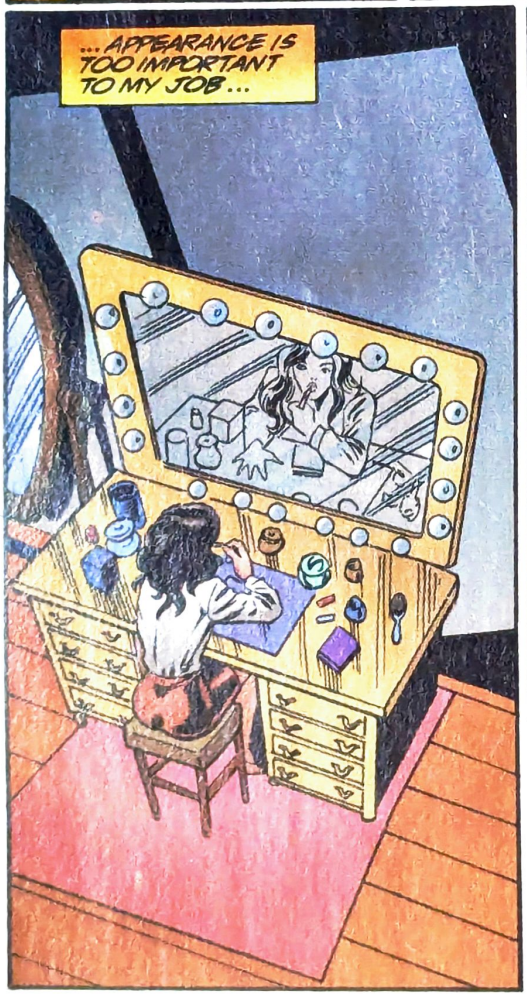
MOMMY, GUS IS THROWIN' CEREAL AT ME!
AM NOT!
GUS, DON'T THROW CEREAL AT YOUR SISTER! EVIE, STOP WHINING!
PEANU BUTT
BERRY JAM
Sun Maid RAISINS

BEEP BEEP
THERE'S THE SCHOOL BUS!
PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY? AND RAISINS? AGAIN?
SO DON'T EAT IT, KID! STARVE!

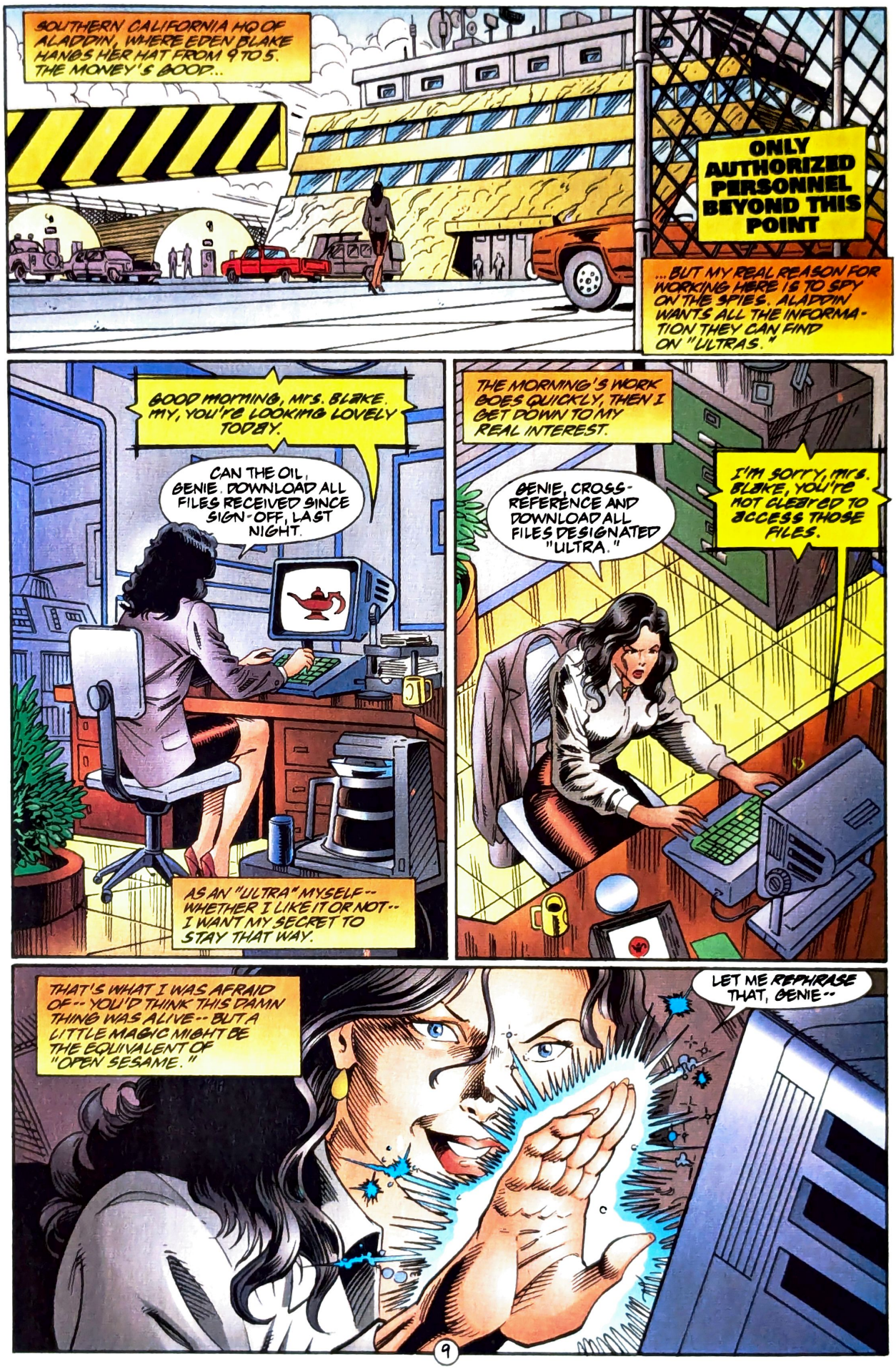
I LIKE RAISINS, MOMMY! I'M GLAD WE DON'T HAVE TA GO LIVE WITH DADDY!
SMAK
ME... ME TOO, EVIE.
SEE YOU TONIGHT! LOVE YOU!
THE POOR KID THINKS I'M REALLY HER MOM...


...BUT THEN, EDEN'S MOTHER THINKS I'M HER DAUGHTER -- AND EDEN'S EX THINKS WE USED TO BE MARRIED. I JUST WANT OUT OF THIS BODY, ONCE AND FOR ALL.

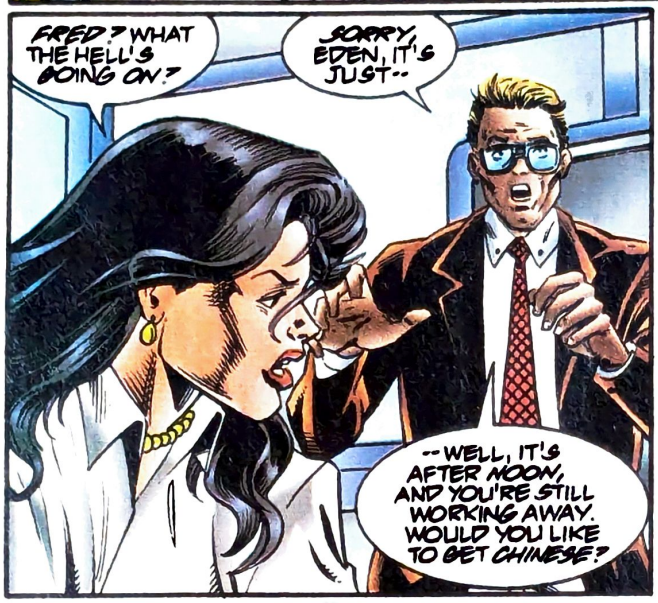
DAMN, I MUST BE PUTTING ON WEIGHT. CAN'T AFFORD THAT...

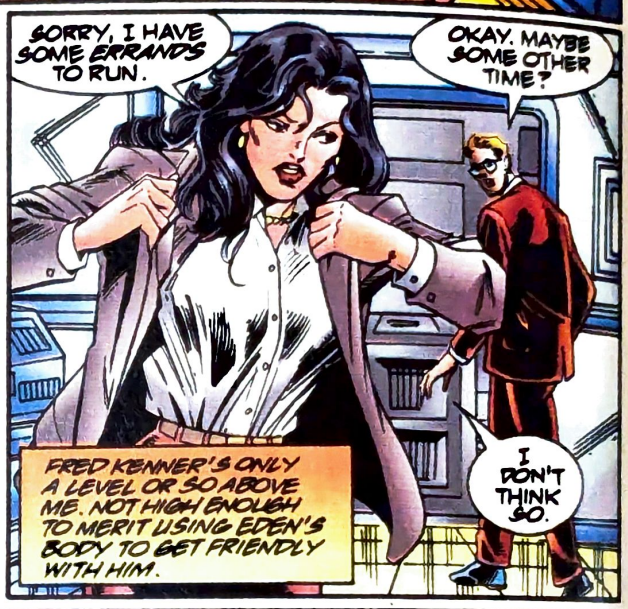

...APPEARANCE IS TOO IMPORTANT TO MY JOB...

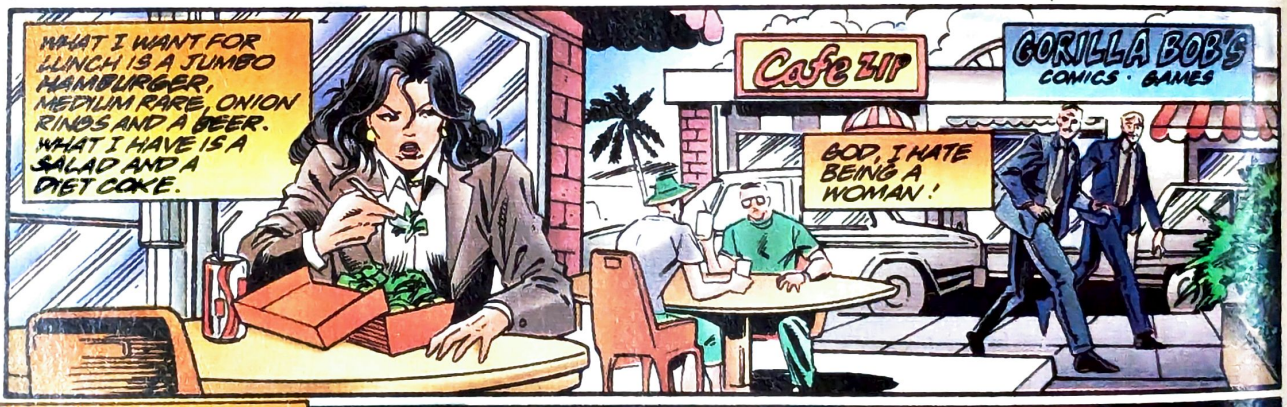
...NO MATTER HOW UNCOMFORTABLE IT IS!

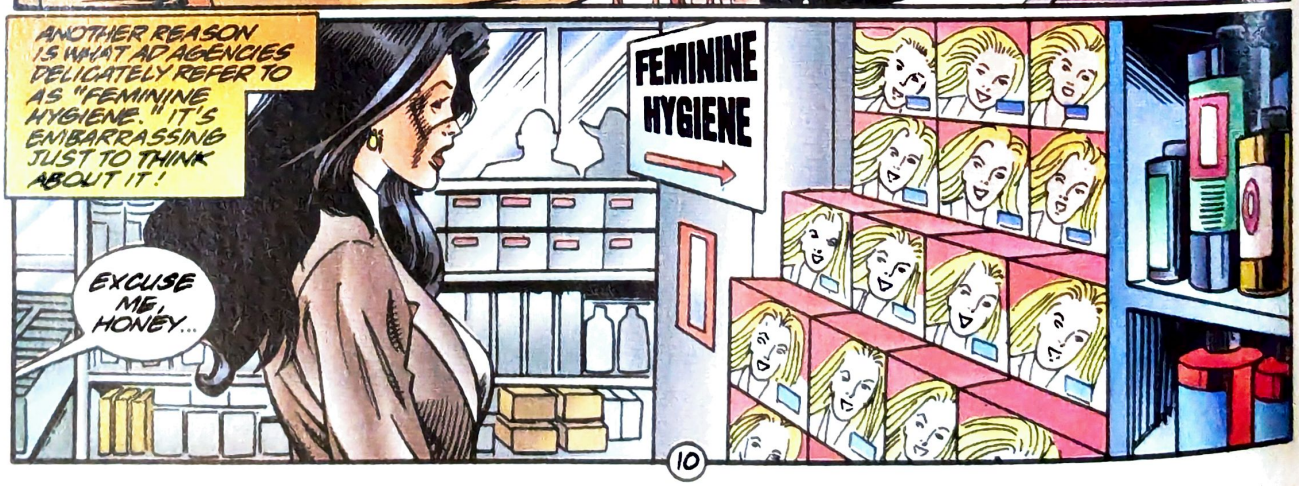

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HQ OF ALADDIN, WHERE EDEN BLAKE HANGS HER HAT FROM 9 TO 5. THE MONEY'S GOOD...
ONLY AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL BEYOND THIS POINT
...BUT MY REAL REASON FOR WORKING HERE IS TO SPY ON THE SPIES. ALADDIN WANTS ALL THE INFORMATION THEY CAN FIND ON "ULTRAS."
GOOD MORNING, MRS. BLAKE. MY, YOU'RE LOOKING LOVELY TODAY.
CAN THE OIL, GENIE. DOWNLOAD ALL FILES RECEIVED SINCE SIGN-OFF, LAST NIGHT.
AS AN "ULTRA" MYSELF-- WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT-- I WANT MY SECRET TO STAY THAT WAY.
THE MORNING'S WORK GOES QUICKLY, THEN I GET DOWN TO MY REAL INTEREST.
GENIE, CROSS-REFERENCE AND DOWNLOAD ALL FILES DESIGNATED "ULTRA."
I'M SORRY, MRS. BLAKE, YOU'RE NOT CLEARED TO ACCESS THOSE FILES.
THAT'S WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF-- YOU'D THINK THIS DAMN THING WAS ALIVE-- BUT A LITTLE MAGIC MIGHT BE THE EQUIVALENT OF "OPEN SESAME."
LET ME REPHRASE THAT, GENIE--

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
HUH--?


FRED? WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?
SORRY, EDEN, IT'S JUST--
--WELL, IT'S AFTER NOON, AND YOU'RE STILL WORKING AWAY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET CHINESE?


SORRY, I HAVE SOME ERRANDS TO RUN.
OKAY. MAYBE SOME OTHER TIME?
FRED KENNER'S ONLY A LEVEL OR SO ABOVE ME. NOT HIGH ENOUGH TO MERIT USING EDEN'S BODY TO GET FRIENDLY WITH HIM.
I DON'T THINK SO.


WHAT I WANT FOR LUNCH IS A JUMBO HAMBURGER, MEDIUM RARE, ONION RINGS AND A BEER. WHAT I HAVE IS A SALAD AND A DIET COKE.
Cafe ZIP
GORILLA BOB'S
COMICS · GAMES
GOD, I HATE BEING A WOMAN!


ANOTHER REASON IS WHAT AD AGENCIES DELICATELY REFER TO AS "FEMININE HYGIENE." IT'S EMBARRASSING JUST TO THINK ABOUT IT!
FEMININE HYGIENE
EXCUSE ME, HONEY...

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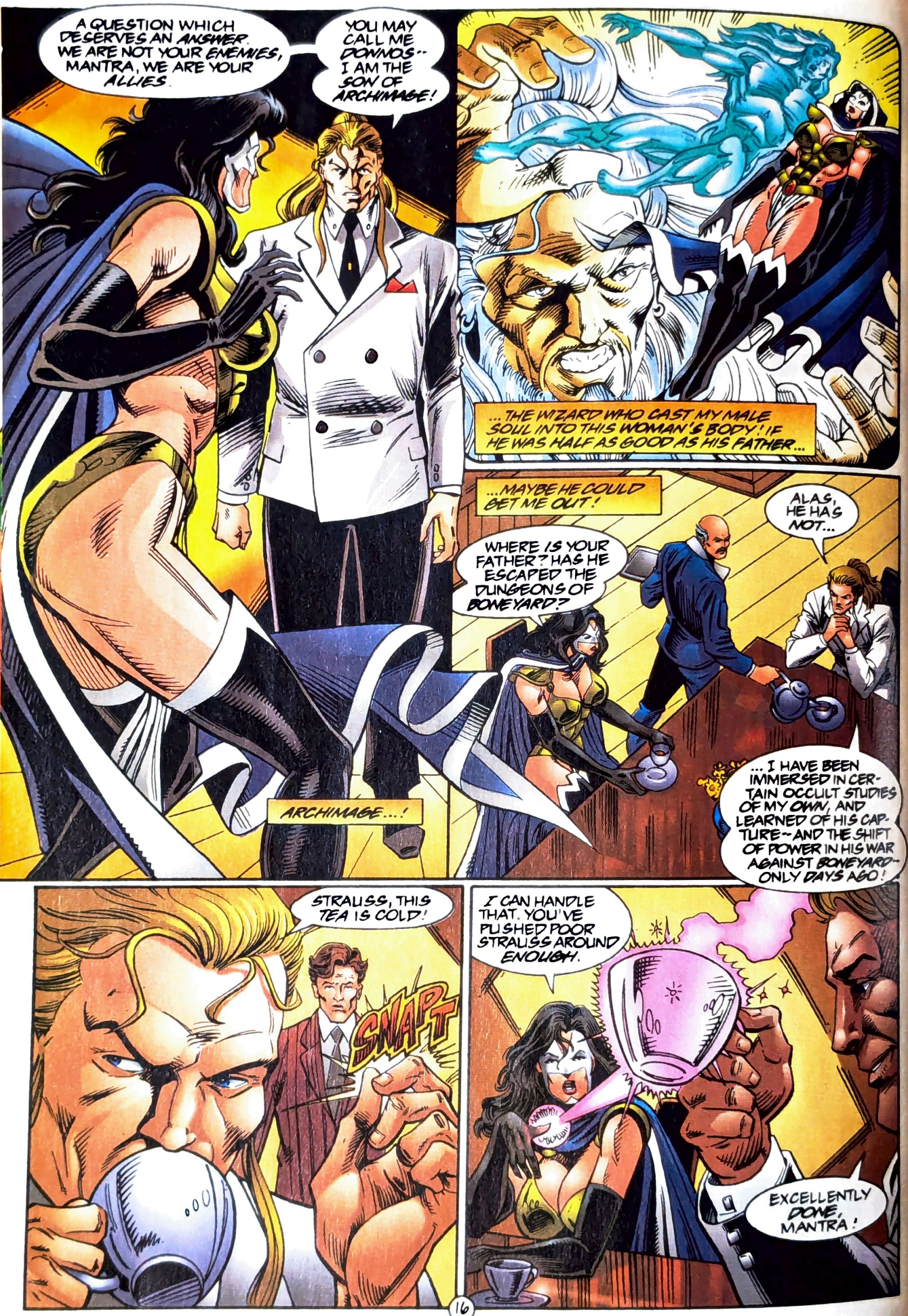
...WOULD YOU KNOW IF THIS PRODUCT REALLY LEAVES YOU FEELING RAINFOREST FRESH?
I DON'T KNOW, LADY! I DON'T WANT TO KNOW! OKAY?
WELL, REALLY--!
MANTRA...!
...MANTRA, I MUST SEE YOU...!
...MANTRA, I MUST SEE YOU...!
STRAUSS? I DIDN'T TRUST HIM ANY FARTHER THAN THIS BODY COULD THROW HIM-- ESPECIALLY NOT AFTER OUR LAST MEETING*...
* MANTRA #5--MWB
...BUT WE ALSO HAD A DEAL...*
...AND IF NOTHING ELSE, I'M A MAN OF MY WORD!
* MANTRA #3--MWB

BESIDES, EVEN THIS ARMOR IS MORE COMFORTABLE THAN A BRA AND HIGH HEELS. THE OFFICE WON'T MISS ME FOR ANOTHER FEW MINUTES...
YOU CALLED, STRAUSS?
MANTRA! THANK GOD YOU'RE HERE...!
...I DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT! THEY MADE ME!
"THEY...?"
THEM, I BET! STRAUSS GOT ME INTO THIS, BUT HE ALSO MANAGED TO WARN ME! I GUESS I OWE HIM ONE...

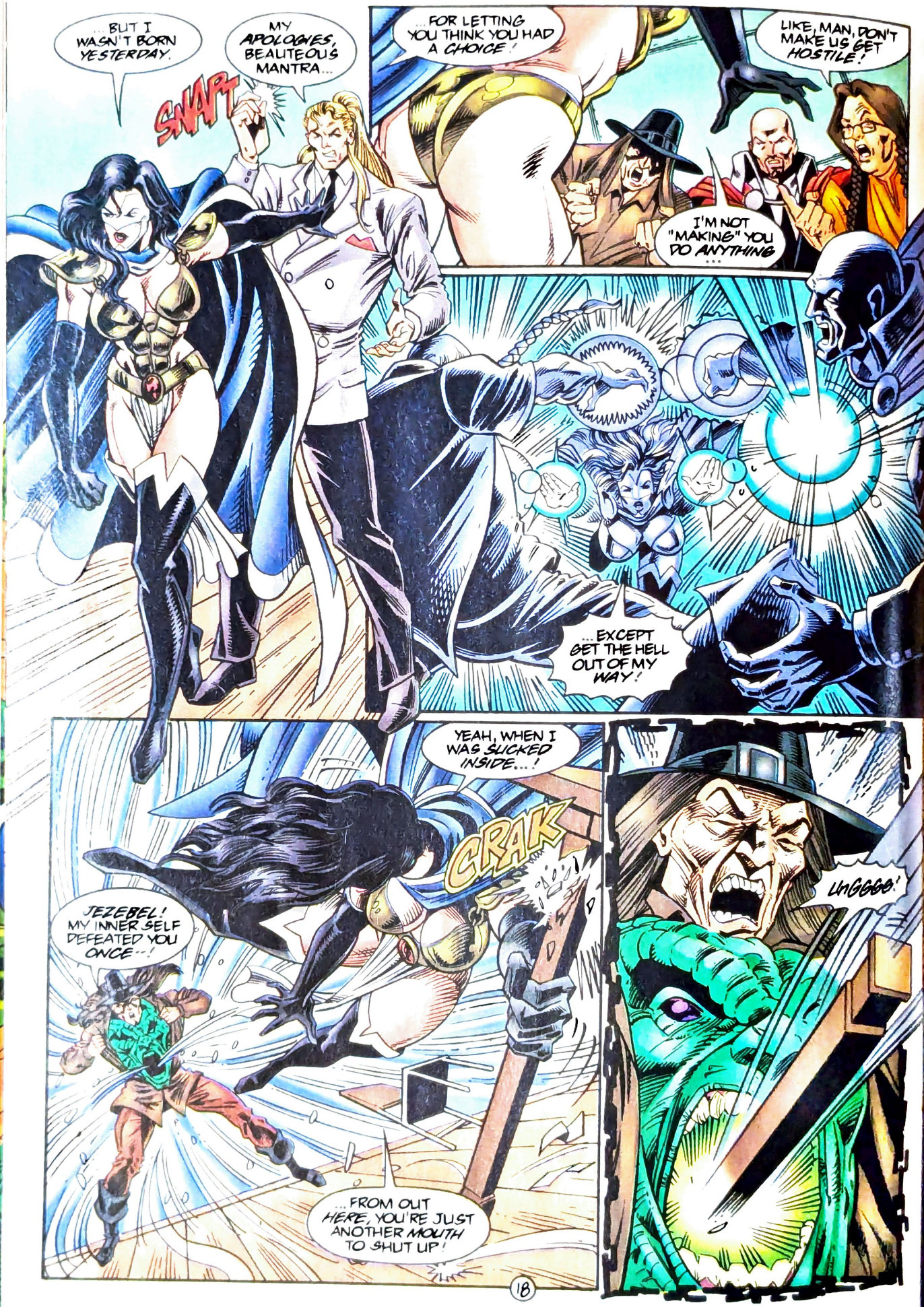
...THEM I OWE SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY!
SHE SEEMS RESOURCEFUL-- AND QUITE COMELY!
SATAN IS GOD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATION!
WHO ARE YOU? WHY DID YOU ATTACK ME?
LIKE, DON'T JUDGE A PERSON BY THE SHAPE OF HER SKIN!
ENOUGH! NARROW YOUR BLAST! THAT WILL PIERCE ANY SHIELD SHE MAY ERECT!
THAT MAY HAVE BEEN TRUE...
...IF IT HIT ME!
MY SHOP!
OW! I'M SENSING SOME HOSTILITY HERE, MAN...!
SLSSSH
"MAN...!"

...IF ONLY THEY KNEW HOW RIGHT THAT WAS!
I WON'T ASK AGAIN: "WHO ARE YOU?"
DON'T MOVE--!
WHAT--?
THAT SMELL... AND THE AIR... POISON!
AGGGGH!
THOSE THINGS ARE DEADLY! GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE...!
TOO MANY TO FIGHT...! IGNORE THE PAIN... ABSORB THE MAGIC...!
WHAT'S MY MANTRA? "CHANGE...

"...GROWTH..."
"...POWER!"
GAHHH!
SPOOT
TOO TIRED TO FIGHT ANYMORE...
WE COULD SLAY HER NOW!
UMMMMM
THAT'S INHUMAN, MORDECAI! WHY DON'T WE JUST LOCK HER UP FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE?
AND WASTE THOSE POWERS, SUNSHINE? NEVER! SHE IS UNTRAINED, BUT HER ABILITIES ARE VAST, AND MUST NOT BE SQUANDERED!
OKAY... I WILL ASK AGAIN: "WHO ARE YOU?"


A QUESTION WHICH DESERVES AN ANSWER. WE ARE NOT YOUR ENEMIES, MANTRA, WE ARE YOUR ALLIES.
YOU MAY CALL ME DONNOS-- I AM THE SON OF ARCHIMAGE!
...THE WIZARD WHO CAST MY MALE SOUL INTO THIS WOMAN'S BODY! IF HE WAS HALF AS GOOD AS HIS FATHER...
...MAYBE HE COULD GET ME OUT!
ALAS, HE HAS NOT...
WHERE IS YOUR FATHER? HAS HE ESCAPED THE DUNGEONS OF BONEYARD?
ARCHIMAGE...!
... I HAVE BEEN IMMERSED IN CERTAIN OCCULT STUDIES OF MY OWN, AND LEARNED OF HIS CAPTURE--AND THE SHIFT OF POWER IN HIS WAR AGAINST BONEYARD--ONLY DAYS AGO!
STRAUSS, THIS TEA IS COLD!
SNAP!
I CAN HANDLE THAT. YOU'VE PUSHED POOR STRAUSS AROUND ENOUGH.
EXCELLENTLY DONE, MANTRA!

MY NAME IS LUKASZ, I TOLD YOU THAT.
OF COURSE... LUKASZ. BUT IT SEEMS SUCH A MASCULINE NAME FOR SUCH A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.
IT'S MASCULINE BECAUSE I AM A MAN.
I WAS PUT INTO THIS BODY BY YOUR FATHER TO LEARN SORCERY. THIS MASK, THE CLOAK AND THE ARMOR ARE SUPPOSED TO ENHANCE THE PROCESS.
I, HOWEVER, POSSESS BOTH. IT IS WITHIN MY POWERS TO TAKE THE SORCEROUS ENERGIES IN YOUR BODY AND INSTILL THEM IN MINE.
... MY ONLY CONDITION IS YOU HAVE TO PUT MY SOUL BACK INTO A MALE BODY.
YES. UNFORTUNATELY, YOUR PROGRESS THUS FAR HAS NOT BEEN AS RAPID AS HOPED. YOU SEEM TO POSSESS NEITHER THE SKILL NOR THE WILL TO FULLY ATTAIN YOUR POTENTIAL FOR SORCERY.
YOU WANT THESE POWERS, DONNOS? YOU'VE GOT THEM...!
OF COURSE, MY DEAR! HOWEVER, THE STRICTURES OF MAGIC REQUIRE THAT YOUR POWERS BE TRANSFERRED FIRST...
... THEN I WILL DEPOSIT YOUR MIND IN WHATEVER FORM YOU WISH!
I HAVEN'T BEEN A WOMAN LONG, DONNOS...


...BUT I WASN'T BORN YESTERDAY.
MY APOLOGIES, BEAUTEOUS MANTRA...
SNAPT
...FOR LETTING YOU THINK YOU HAD A CHOICE!
LIKE, MAN, DON'T MAKE US GET HOSTILE!
I'M NOT "MAKING" YOU DO ANYTHING...
...EXCEPT GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY!
YEAH, WHEN I WAS SUCKED INSIDE...!
CRAK
JEZEBEL! MY INNER SELF DEFEATED YOU ONCE--!
...FROM OUT HERE, YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER MOUTH TO SHUT UP!
LnGGGG!

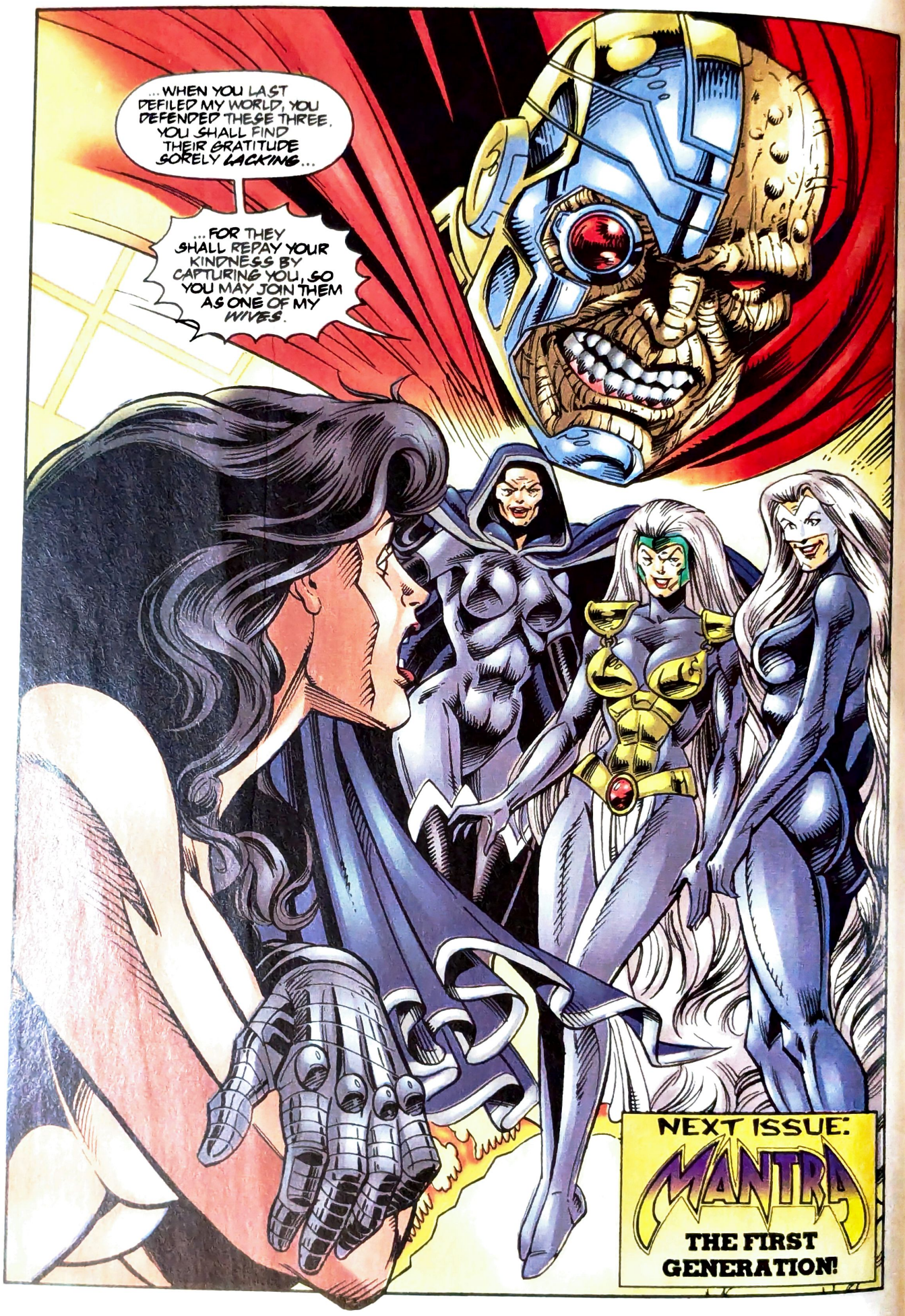
DAMN IT, HOW MUCH OF MY POWER DO YOU BUNGLERS REQUIRE? SHE'S JUST A WOMAN!
DONNOS HAS EMPOWERING THEM! HE WAS THE SON OF ARCHIMAGE, ALL RIGHT!
BUT HE WAS MY ENEMY...
...AND I HAD ONLY SECONDS TO TAKE CARE OF HIM!
THE PROBLEM WITH SPOKEN SPELLS IS THAT CUTTING OFF AIR CUTS THE SPELL OFF, TOO...
...AND THAT CUT HIS POWER OFF TO HIS LACKEYS! THEY STILL HAD THE PHYSICAL ADVANTAGE OVER THIS BODY...
AGGGH!
...BUT I HAD MY OWN RESOURCES!
USE THE... IRON WEAPONRY AGAINST HER!
19

THE IRON ARMOR WAS STOLEN, LORD DONNOS -- BY THE SERVANT OF BONEYARD!
"IRON ARMOR?" THAT RANG A BELL...
... THE "IRON KNIGHT" I FOUGHT TWO DAYS AGO WORE IRON ARMOR... AND HE WAS REALLY A SERVANT OF BONEYARD, DOMINATING EDEN'S EX-HUSBAND!*
*LAST ISSUE -- MWB
I SENT HIM PACKING, BUT KEPT THE ARMOR, THINKING I COULD MYSTICALLY "TRACE" IT, SOMEDAY!
"SOMEDAY" IS NOW! DONNOS AND COMPANY WOULD THINK I WAS OFF SOMEWHERE, LICKING MY WOUNDS...
... BUT IF I COULD ATTACK THEM RIGHT AWAY, I'D HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE...
YES!

IT STOOD TO REASON IF OTHER MAGIC OBJECTS HAD BEEN STORED AROUND THE ARMOR, THAT IT HAD PICKED UP SOME SORT OF MYSTIC "AFFINITY" FOR THOSE OBJECTS...
... AND IF I COULD ENHANCE THAT AFFINITY, I'D BE IN BUSI--
CLUNK
LOOKS LIKE I USE THE DOOR, THIS TIME!
THERE! I COULD STRIKE HER NOW, BUT THE WOULD-BE SAVIOR OF ARCHIMAGE GOES TO BATTLE THE WIZARD'S WHELP...
... AND THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND! LET THEM CLASH! I SHALL ATTACK THE EXHAUSTED VICTOR!
SHALL I FREE NOTCH TO ASSEMBLE AN ASSAULT TEAM, LORD BONEYARD?
LET HIM CONTINUE TO COOL HIS HEELS IN THE DUNGEON. PREPARE THE THREE FOR THIS MISSION!
EXCELLENT CHOICE, SIR. WILL YOU REQUIRE MORE... ER... "CONTRIBUTORS" TO YOUR SCRYING POOL?
ARRGH

NOT NOW. BUT HAVE SOME AVAILABLE, I MAY WISH TO VIEW EARTH TELEVISION, LATER.
YES, INDEED, SIR.
THE WAY THIS THING IS GLOWING, DONNOS' HEADQUARTERS MUST BE THAT OLD IRON FOUNDRY. IF THEY'RE NOT HOME, I'LL PLANT A LITTLE SURPRISE...
...AND IF THEY ARE HOME, I WON'T STAND ON CEREMONY!
THE WOMAN!
HERE?
STAY BACK, OR I'LL--
...BUT IT'S GOT MORE THAN ONE USE!
I WON'T -- NOT WITH THIS IRON GAUNTLET BLOCKING MY SPELL...
WHING

I'D SURRENDER, IF I WERE YOU! WITH HIM DEAD, YOUR POWER WILL--
NO! NOT HERE--!
THEY'RE NOT POINTING AT ME...
...BUT WHO--?
AGGGH!
WHERE'S MY ARMOR?
MY MASK--?
AND MY--?
OH, NO.
YES, LUKASZ...


...WHEN YOU LAST DEFILED MY WORLD, YOU DEFENDED THESE THREE. YOU SHALL FIND THEIR GRATITUDE SORELY LACKING...
...FOR THEY SHALL REPAY YOUR KINDNESS BY CAPTURING YOU, SO YOU MAY JOIN THEM AS ONE OF MY WIVES.
NEXT ISSUE:
MANTRA
THE FIRST GENERATION!

# Mantra's ~~male~~ mail

| | |
|---|---|
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| Robb Phipps | Penciller |
| Andrew Pepoy | Inker |
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| Pat Owsley | Letterer |
| Albert Calleros | Cover Colorist |
| Tim Divar | Color Design |
| Violent Hues | Interior Color Team |
| Chris Ulm | Editor-In-Chief |
| Dan Danko | Senior Editor |
| Hank Kanalz | Line Editor |

*Hi there, Ultraverts. Diane Botta and Steve Lowry manned (a pun! At least, in Mantra, it's a pun!) this column for the first few issues, but now I'm taking the bull by the tail and facing the situation myself (to quote Groucho Marx). This is a pretty cool time for Mantra, as this issue begins a six-part storyline we call "The Archimage Quest!" Mantra is determined to free Archimage from Boneyard's dungeons, or die trying! Will Mantra live as a man, or die as a woman? Sit tight, and find out!*

*As Mantra's creator, I've always read every one of your letters, and I'm looking forward to getting back to writing the letter columns myself. All Mantra-related correspondence is welcomed here, but especially those letters which are typewritten or neatly printed. (Mantra's eyes are cobalt blue — mine are bloodshot red.) So let's go...*

***— MWB***

The first six issues of Mantra pleased me because there was a dynamic female character taking care of herself. It's regrettable the comic represents the idea that it takes a man's soul or consciousness to make such a woman. I'm writing in response to the situations and editorials in issue #7.

Because I was impressed with the gender-conscious writing of Lukasz, a "man" trying to adjust to the difficulties many women face everyday (sexual harassment, single-parenting), I was disgusted watching the story plunge into glaring stereotypes of a woman as a victim to be rescued and an "ultra-powered" womb used in the reproduction of an evil monster. Face it, women do a helluva lot more in this world than sit around waiting to be saved or being sexual objects for disgusting creeps.

And as for "Lukasz" responding in the letters column: Insulting, sexist and pointless. Mr. Atwood of Phoenix raised a very good point about the sexy-goddess portrayed in comic books. However, through the use of Lukasz, the editor blows off Atwood's comments, and I would suspect others as "jealousy". Simply because our society portrays women as sex objects through magazines, commercials, and t.v. shows, doesn't make gorgeous, save-me comic book characters acceptable; it makes them bimbos without the depth of character real women possess. Take a stand against sexism, don't brush it off as "the way things are".

I truly enjoy this title and hope that last issue was only a momentary lapse of creativity and consideration of diversity which the Ultraverse line seems to possess.

Kelley J. Hall
Akron, OH

*Well, there's nothing like a major challenge on the first day of the job. Let's take your points in reverse order, Kelley:*

*"Lukasz" response in the letter column: you're right, it was "insulting, sexist and pointless." But though Lukasz did write the answer to Arthur Matten, Jr. his own self (or is that her own self?), Lukasz did not write the response you objected to, nor did MWB or editor Ulm. We're not sure who did (though we've narrowed it down to either Boneyard or the Puppeteer), but it wasn't Lukasz, who would certainly not slough off an issue like that with the excuse of "jealousy". All letter column responses will be carefully monitored from now on to make sure they come from either Mike Barr himself or Mantra herself. (Or is that himself?) Mantra causes lots of what Daffy Duck once called "pronoun trouble".*

*On Mantra as helpless victim: Potential victim sure. Mantra had been captured and drugged, and was in no shape to physically fight Doc Gross. Even at her best, Mantra is no match for Doc Gross in terms of sheer muscle power. But you'll notice that though Prime did rescue Mantra, he was led to her side by a strategy devised by Mantra herself! Mantra had the brains to develop this scheme in very little time, even though drugged, and trusted in her friendship with Prime for him to pick up on it and follow through. There's always someone stronger out there, but there's not necessarily someone smarter. As to the "glaring stereotype of a woman...as ultra-powerful womb used for reproduction of an evil an evil monster..." I maintain that's totally in the character for Doc Gross, who thinks Mantra is another of his experiments, like Prime. Mantra will have a rematch with Doc. G. in a few issues in which she'll give him a piece of her mind—and, hopefully, about three feet of the Sword of Fangs, point first. Let us know what you think.*

*— MWB (a native Akronite my own self—have a large Chicken dinner at Belgrade's for me!)*

*By the way, don't be shy about commenting on Ultraverse Premiere #2, which is piggy-backed on this very issue! If anyone wants to see Elven meet the Ultraverse's premiere heroine, give us a holler! (Or better still, drop us a line. You know how sensitive our nerves are!)*

"The Ultraverse's premiere heroine?" That's right, rub it in.

–Lukasz

*Hope you enjoyed this as much as I did (and I think all of us enjoyed it more than Mantra!). Thanks for writing and for buying, and thanks especially for reading!*

BEGINNING A NEW FEATURE: ASK MANTRA!

Of course, the Ultraverse's exclusive "Ask Diane" feature every month in the Ultrafiles has become one of our most popular columns. So, I'm thinking, why not do our version of it every month here in "Mantra's Mail"? In this space, the Ultraverse's Golden Sorceress will personally answer your questions every month! Just include your questions to Mantra in your usual Mantra fan letters. Let's kick off our new department with a query from Steve Bowen of Newark, CA:

Dear Mantra:

What happens to the souls of the bodies you take over?

Dear Steve:

*I think that question was pretty much answered for both of us in Mantra #6, where I found out — to my horror — that all the souls of the bodies I'd taken over throughout the centuries were still living in my head. Fortunately, I was saved by that mysterious woman. She appeared to me again in a dream the other night. Eventually, I hope she identifies herself. I'd like to thank her.*

*I hope that answers your question, Steve, but in the future, please call me "Lukasz."*

–Lukasz

P.S.: "The Ultraverse's Golden Sorceress"? You're asking for it, Barr...

*Next Issue:* Don't ask *how* Mantra will defeat the three wives of Boneyard, ask *if* she will! Some backstory on Mantra's golden armor, more on that mysterious spirit *and a different costume* for Malibu's most magical maiden! (You didn't think she was gonna run around nekkid as a jaybird all issue, did you? This is a family comic!) *Plus: Mantra cooks for the kids!* And you thought *Boneyard* was dangerous! It's all in the second chapter of "The Archimage Quest": "Mantra: The First Generation!"

–Mike W. Barr

MANTRA: It's the Best From the 'Verse!

*"Malibu's most magical maiden"? You really want to die, don't you, Barr? And I'd better not run around naked all issue!*

*— Lukasz*

# ULTRAFILES

Floods, Fire, Earthquake and now a new Malibu office: the trauma here in the land of bikini wax and Sushi pizza never stops! The new offices are great: plenty of room, new desks, the Malibu Interactive guys are just down the hall, and best of all, I don't have to sit in Editorial Assistant Phil Crain's lap to make a phone call anymore! (We were just slightly crowded in the old building!)

I'll miss you too, Phil!

As I tape my Mr. Bill action figure in its appointed place on the side of my Macintosh and staple my rubber chicken to the shelves above my desk, I think seriously about *UltraFiles*. The deadline is approaching, the sun is sinking below the horizon and I only have a few short hours to put this month's column to rest. To fail to put pen to paper now risks the fatal wrath of Senior Editor Dan Danko. A man—nay, a creature—with printer's ink instead of blood and a timepiece for a heart!

But what to write about? The pressure is getting to me! I'm blocked! Maybe I could write about the Ultraverse Founder's Conference on the lovely (if small) island of Catalina, just off the coast to California. I could write about the incredibly cool things that are going to happen in the Ultraverse books—the revelation and exploration of an alien realm millions of times the size of the Earth, the origin of the living computer GENIE, the unlikely connection that links Prime to Sludge, the return of a character that was dead the first time you saw him (hint hint!) and the birth of a very unlikely supergroup founded by—Prime? (*UltraForce* #0 begins in the June issue of *Wizard:* don't you dare miss it!)

Or I could urge you to check out what's happening this month: the debut of Rogue Prime, a new look for Mantra, Hardcase returns to Groom Lake, Lord Pumpkin offers to put Sludge out of his misery—if the monster will do one small task first! The most powerful character in the Ultraverse is born (check out *Rune* for the story!), a new Prototype appears on the scene, The Strangers find themselves stranded on an alien realm, Wrath discovers the Freex, and The Night Man goes head to

Chris Ulm caricature by Patrick Owsley.
Caricature coloring by Debra Pierson.

head—with a werewolf! The Solution—No—the sun is rising and I'm not finished! Please Dan just a few more—

*Sorry, Chris, but they're towing your car from the lot. If you run you should be able to catch them!*

...

...

...

*That should buy me a few minutes. I've got one word to say...just one:* Warstrike! *That's right, he's finally got his own monthly comic and it's the greatest thing since sliced bread! The first issue is out in May and--*

Dan! There's no tow truck! Daaaaaaaaan!

*Bye!*

Who is this intimidating fellow? He's Hellion, that's who! Check out *Wrath* #1 and #2 to see him in action! It's awesome!

Hellion is created by Eric Dinehart and David Ammerman.


FROM SUITING UP TO LIFT-OFF TO TOUCHDOWN—JOIN THE U.S. ASTRONAUTS ON THEIR HISTORIC SPACE ADVENTURE

# COUNTDOWN TO THE MOON

25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

STEVE ENGLEHART

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Steve Englehart, the talented writer behind *The Strangers* and *The Night Man* has chronicled the the day-to-day events of the first moon flight. Scheduled to be in book stores in May of 1994, this non-fiction novel is the perfect way to relive that historical event or learn about it for the first time. Loaded with photos and facts, it's a must-have for any fans of Steve Englehart and great literature!



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inked by Andrew Pepoy
interior color by
Violent Hues
color design by Tim Divar
edited by Chris Ulm

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written by
Len Strazewski
pencilled by Greg Luzniak
inked by Tim Roddick
interior color by
Food Hammer
color design by Tim Divar
edited by Hank Kanalz

## RIPFIRE™ Part II

written & pencilled by
Darick Robertson
inked by Jon Holdredge
interior color by
Violent Hues
color design by
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edited by Hank Kanalz

## WARSTRIKE™ Part II

written by Dan Danko
pencilled & inked by
Hoang Nguyen
interior color by
Violent Hues
color design by Tim Divar
edited by Hank Kanalz

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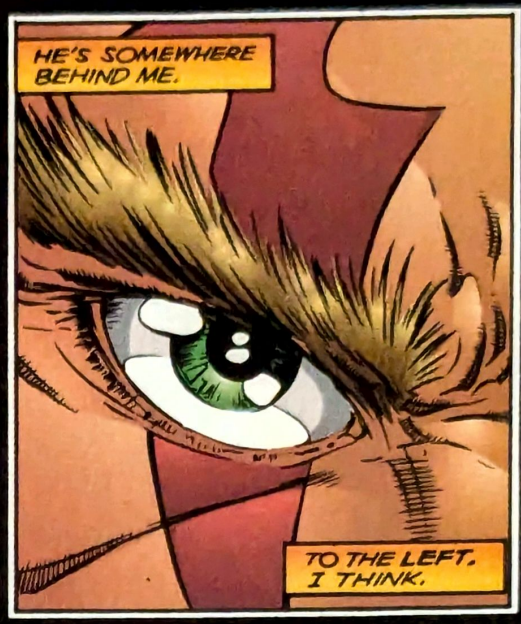
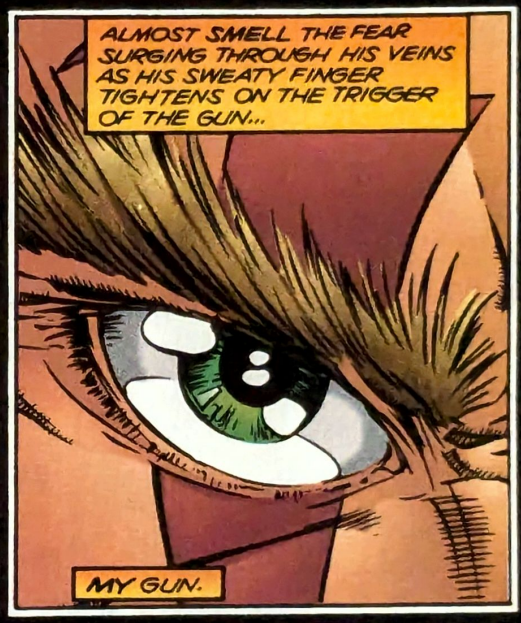
THE HUNTER HAS BECOME THE HUNTED.

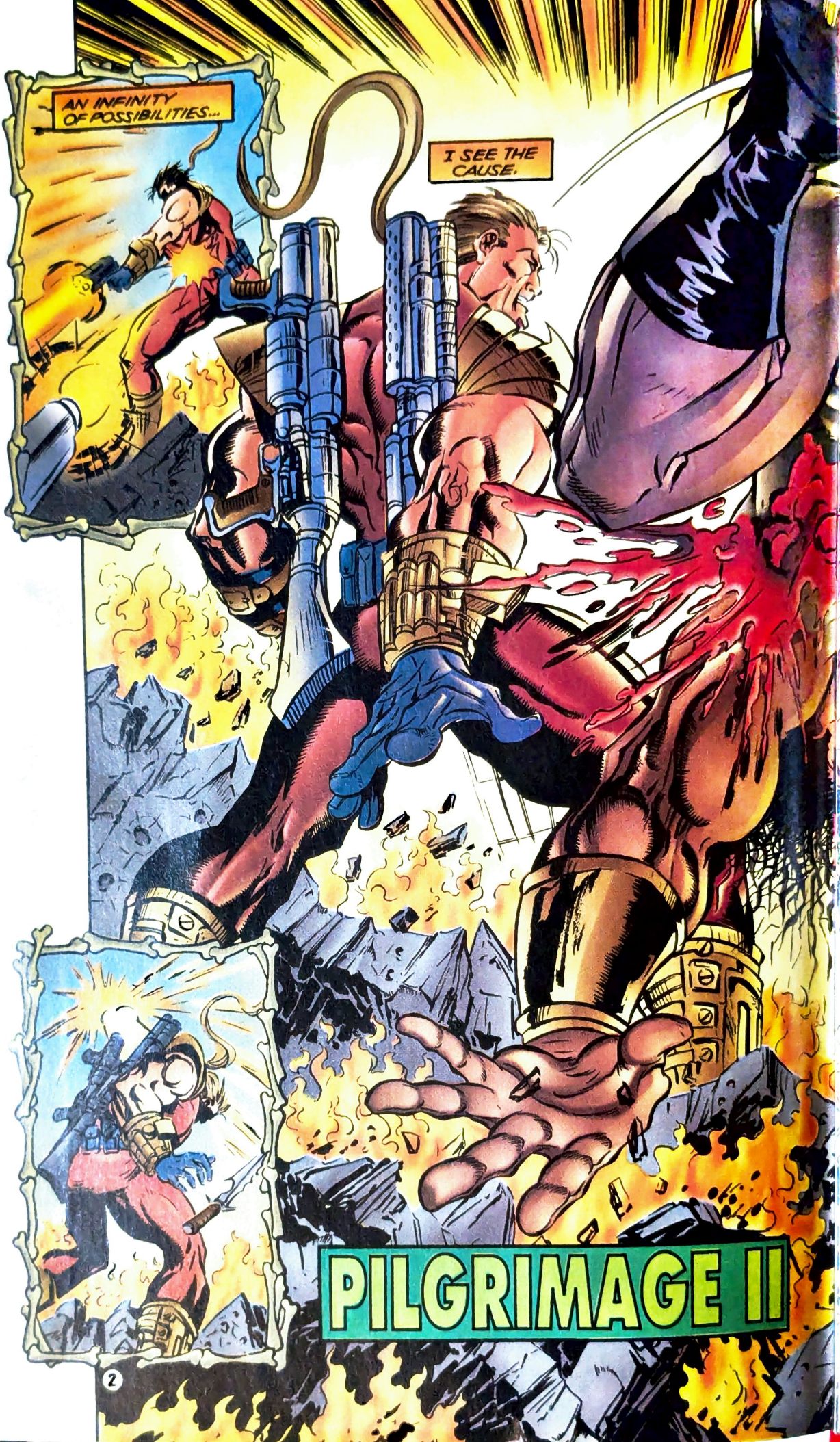

HE'S SOMEWHERE BEHIND ME.
TO THE LEFT. I THINK.

I CAN ALMOST HEAR HIS HEARTBEAT...

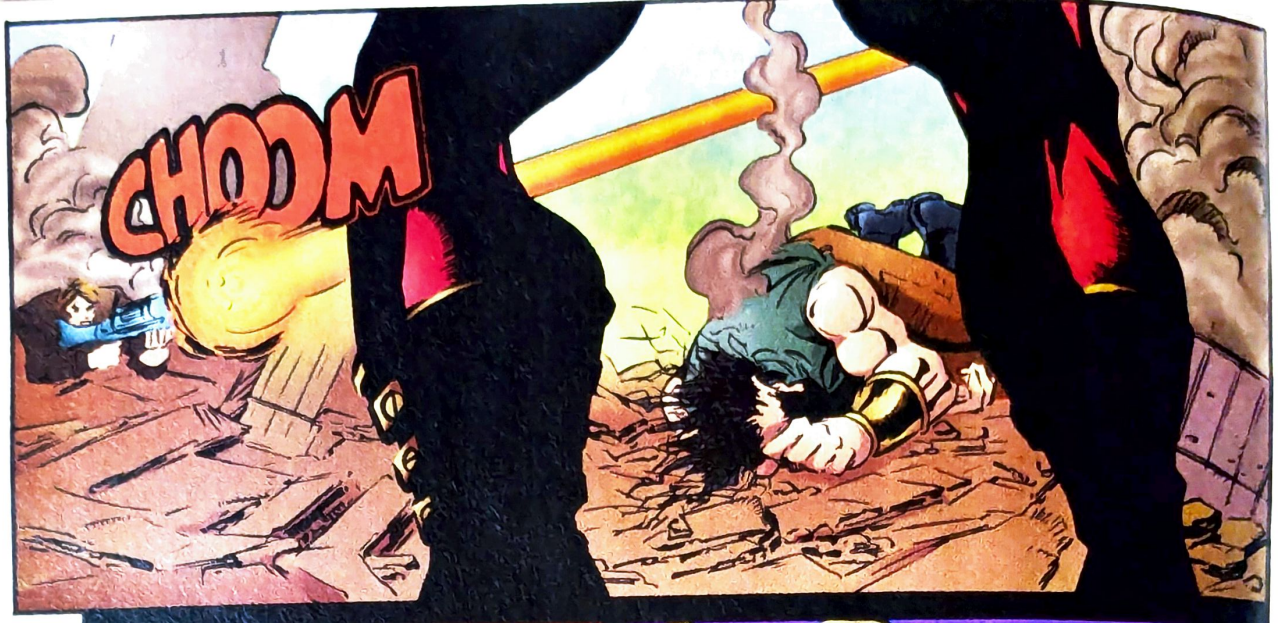

ALMOST SMELL THE FEAR SURGING THROUGH HIS VEINS AS HIS SWEATY FINGER TIGHTENS ON THE TRIGGER OF THE GUN...
MY GUN.

I'M ABOUT TO TAKE A BLAST THAT WILL CUT ME IN HALF.
BUT THEN THE LIGHT COMES...

AND MY PATH IS CLEAR...


AN INFINITY OF POSSIBILITIES...
I SEE THE CAUSE.
PILGRIMAGE II

I FEEL THE EFFECT.
IN A NANOSECOND ALL MY POSSIBLE ACTIONS FLASH THROUGH MY BRAIN ALONG WITH THEIR OUTCOME.
I CAN "SEE" THE POSSIBLE FUTURES OF MY ACTIONS AND I CHOSE THE ONE WHICH IS MOST CONDUCIVE TO MY CONTINUED SURVIVAL.
YARGH!
BOOM
UNFORTUNATELY, I CAN'T SAY THE SAME FOR NIKO.
dan DANKO writer
hoang NGUYEN art
dave LANPHEAR letters
robert ALVORD colors
violent HUES interior colorists
roland MANN editor


CHOOM

UHGNK!

DAMN!

KEEP FROM BLACKING OUT...
...REST WILL BE HERE SOON...
...GET TO SAFETY...

IT'S IRONIC...
HOW QUICKLY ROLES CHANGE.

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED HERE?
MR. STRAND WON'T LIKE THIS ONE BIT.
LIKE WHAT...?

I SEE.

NIKO, WHAT HAPPENED?
IT...

IT CAME... SURPRISED...
IT...

"NO CHANCE..."
"IT,' NIKO?

"ITS DON'T BLEED.
"BUT MEN DO."

I'M DYING.
WHEN I FIRST GOT INTO THE LINE OF ULTRAHERO FOR HIRE, I USED A LARGE CHUNK OF MY FORTUNE TO BUY A NANOTECH AUGMENTED HEALING POWER.
TO MAKE THINGS A LITTLE MORE EXCITING, I BOUGHT THE TECHNOLOGY FROM WOO PARTS, A LESS THAN REPUTABLE MANUFACTURER.
WOO GAVE ME TWO GUARANTEES...
THE FIRST...
SOMETIMES THE POWER WOULD WORK.
THE SECOND...
SOMETIMES IT WOULDN'T.

H-HELP...
PLEASE...
YOU HEARD THE MAN, QUENTIN. HELP HIM.
YES, SIR.
I HAVE JUST THE RIGHT THING.
THIS IS YOUR SECOND CHANCE, NIKO. A SECOND FAILURE WILL NOT FIND ME SO KIND.
THIS WILL ONLY HURT A BIT...
AND THEN YOU'LL FEEL LIKE A NEW MAN.
AAAAAARGH!

GET UP!
GET UP YOU INCOMPETENT FOOL AND FIND THE MAN THAT SO EASILY DISPOSED OF YOU AND YOUR PITIFUL GANG!
AAAOOO!
A SHARP NOISE FLOATS ACROSS THE WAREHOUSE AND PIERCES THE DARKNESS OF MY HEAD.
CRASH
IT'S A HOWL OF PAIN...
AND I WANT TO HOWL BACK IN KINSHIP OF ITS AGONY.
BUT ITS ALSO A HOWL OF THE WOLF...
FRESH ON THE TRAIL OF ITS WOUNDED PREY.
DRIVEN FORWARD BY THE MADDENING HUNGER...
OF HATRED.
TO BE CONTINUED!

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SIMON ERIC JOHN

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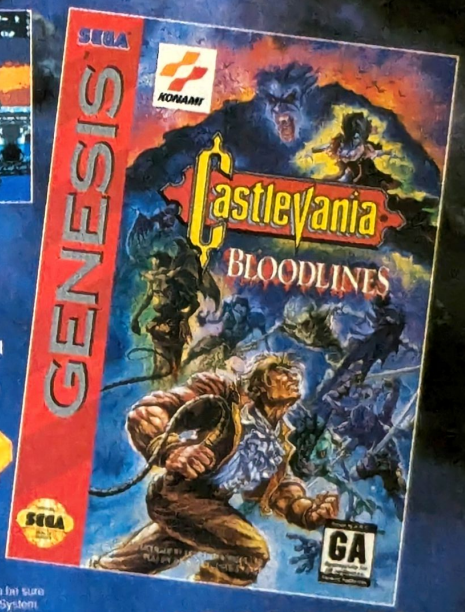

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KONAMI®

# ELVEN™

*On a recent visit to the Malibu offices, Kara Lamb cornered Len Strazewski at the infamous "Malibu Picnic Table of Doom" and asked him a few questions about his newest character in the Ultraverse, Elven, who is connected to Prime, which just so happens to be co-written by Strazewski. Elven was designed by Prime artist Norm Breyfogle.*

***Kara Lamb:** Who is Elven?*

**Len Strazewski:** She is the female counter-part to Prime. But unlike Prime who is motivated by ultra-heroes, Elven is motivated by fantasy. That means that while Prime reads *Hardcase* comics, Elven reads fantasy books, like those by J.R.R. Tolkien. The bodies that both teenagers develop when they transform into ultra-heroes reflect their interests. Elvia Swenson, born of normal parents, develops a body that reflects her desire to be a Warrior Princess, an elfin Queen.

***Lamb:** What is the significance of Elven?*

**Strazewski:** Elven alerts readers to the fact that there are more Prime-like characters in the Ultraverse. She is but one of the first to be revealed. More importantly, however, she is going to reflect the growing concern about domestic violence and the treatment of women in society. Her story is going to make a conscious effort to deal with issues addressing female concerns. Not only does it give the book a unique look, I also think it's about time a comic took on this side of the story. Plus, it's only natural that a teen-age girl, who is actually a battered child, would take on these concerns when she becomes her own version of an ultra-hero.

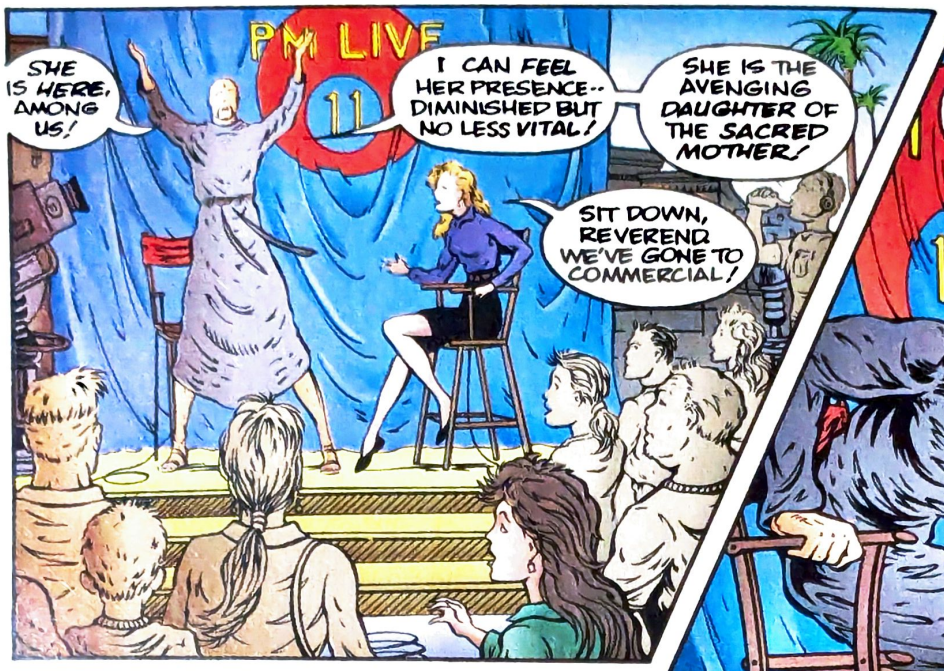
***Lamb:** What directions do you hope to take Elven in, or in what directions do you think she will take you?*

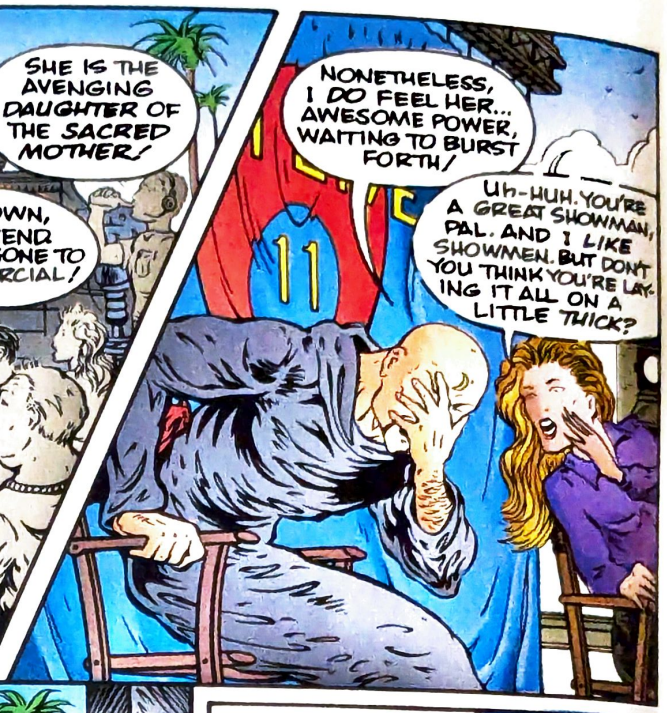
**Strazewski:** If there is a chance to do more Elven stories, I'd like to further explore more of the issues I just mentioned: violence, sexual harassment, etc. Violence in general will be addressed. Elvia is a battered child and the story of Elven is going to be the story of what violence can do to a young person in today's society. But I'd also like to use Elven more to explore the origins of Prime and the Ultraverse. Both teens are victims of Doc Gross and his experiments so they have a common bond, a kinship basically.

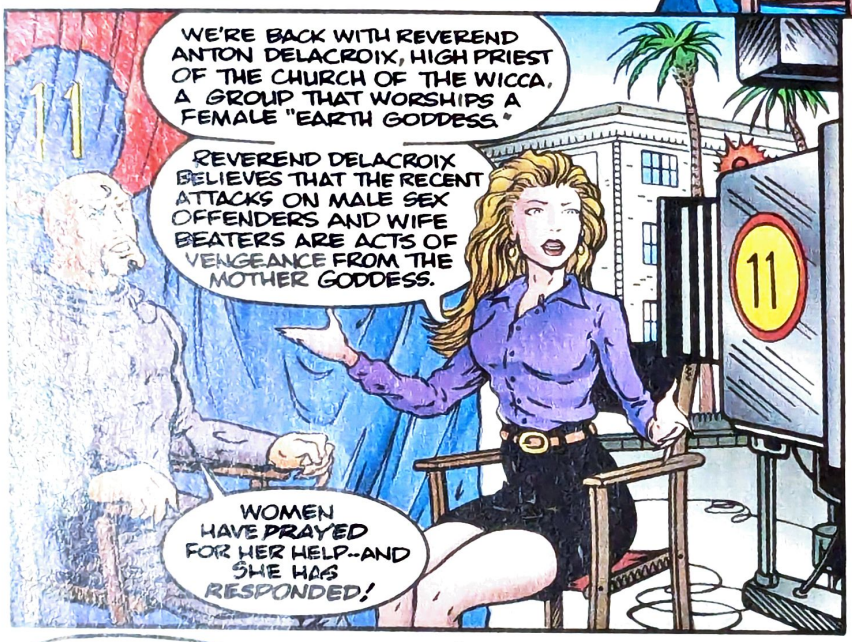
***Lamb:** What will Elven's impact be on the Ultraverse? On Prime?*

**Strazewski:** Her appearance will teach Prime his origins, his potential and give him hope. Her existence will teach him that he is not alone.

EXPOSED!
THRICE SHE HAS STRUCK AND SHE WILL STRIKE AGAIN! TO AVENGE ALL WOMEN AND HONOR THE SACRED MOTHER!
WRITER
LEN STRAZEWSKI
PENCILLER
GREG LUZNIAK
INKER
TIM RODDICK
LETTERER
TIM ELDRED
COLOR DESIGN
MICKY ROSE
INTERIOR COLORISTS
VIOLENT HUES
EDITOR
HANK KANALZ
ELVEN CHARACTER DESIGN BY
NORM BREYFOGLE


PM LIVE
11
SHE IS HERE, AMONG US!
I CAN FEEL HER PRESENCE-- DIMINISHED BUT NO LESS VITAL!
SHE IS THE AVENGING DAUGHTER OF THE SACRED MOTHER!
SIT DOWN, REVEREND. WE'VE GONE TO COMMERCIAL!

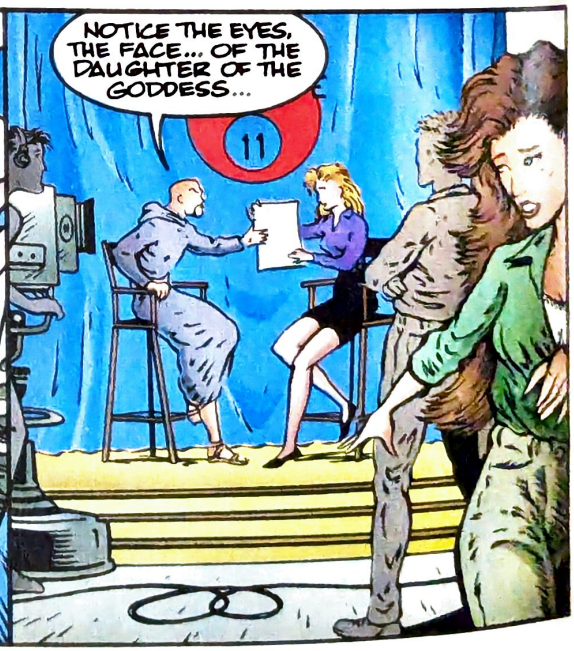

NONETHELESS, I DO FEEL HER... AWESOME POWER, WAITING TO BURST FORTH!
UH-HUH. YOU'RE A GREAT SHOWMAN, PAL. AND I LIKE SHOWMEN. BUT DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE LAYING IT ALL ON A LITTLE THICK?
11


WE'RE BACK WITH REVEREND ANTON DELACROIX, HIGH PRIEST OF THE CHURCH OF THE WICCA, A GROUP THAT WORSHIPS A FEMALE "EARTH GODDESS."
REVEREND DELACROIX BELIEVES THAT THE RECENT ATTACKS ON MALE SEX OFFENDERS AND WIFE BEATERS ARE ACTS OF VENGEANCE FROM THE MOTHER GODDESS.
WOMEN HAVE PRAYED FOR HER HELP--AND SHE HAS RESPONDED!
11

WELL, WHOEVER OR WHATEVER IT WAS, IT BEAT THOSE JERKS WITHIN AN INCH OF THEIR LIVES!
AND AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, THEY DESERVED IT!

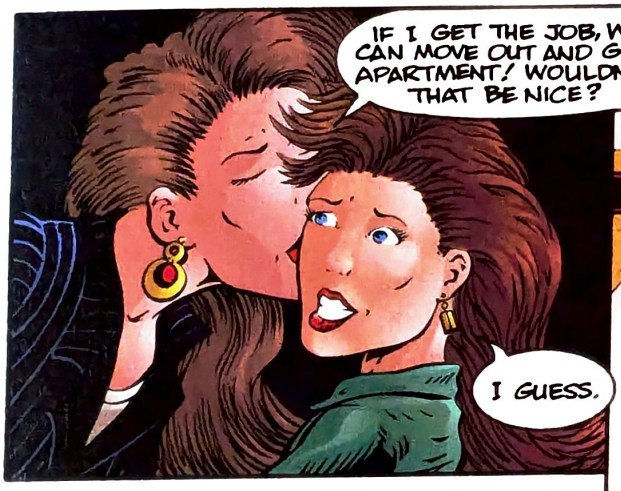
DESERVED! ALL DESERVED! THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE IS SACRED!
AND I SUPPOSE THAT IS WHY A MAN HEADS YOUR CHURCH, EH, REVEREND?

BASED ON DESCRIPTIONS FROM HER VICTIMS, HERE IS WHAT THE FEMALE AVENGER LOOKS LIKE!
LOOKS LIKE A REAL TOUGH SISTER!


NOTICE THE EYES, THE FACE... OF THE DAUGHTER OF THE GODDESS...
11

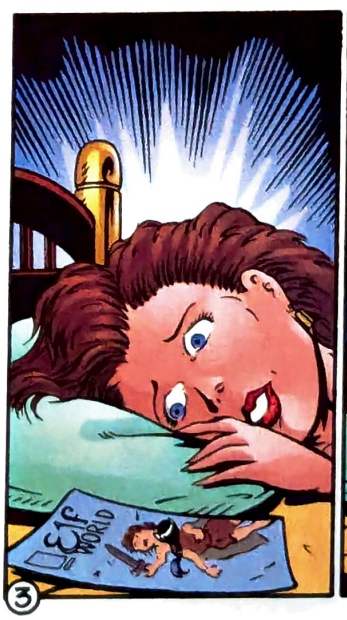
ELVIA, YOUR MOTHER WAS LOOKING FOR YOU. SHE HAS GOOD NEWS!
OKAY.

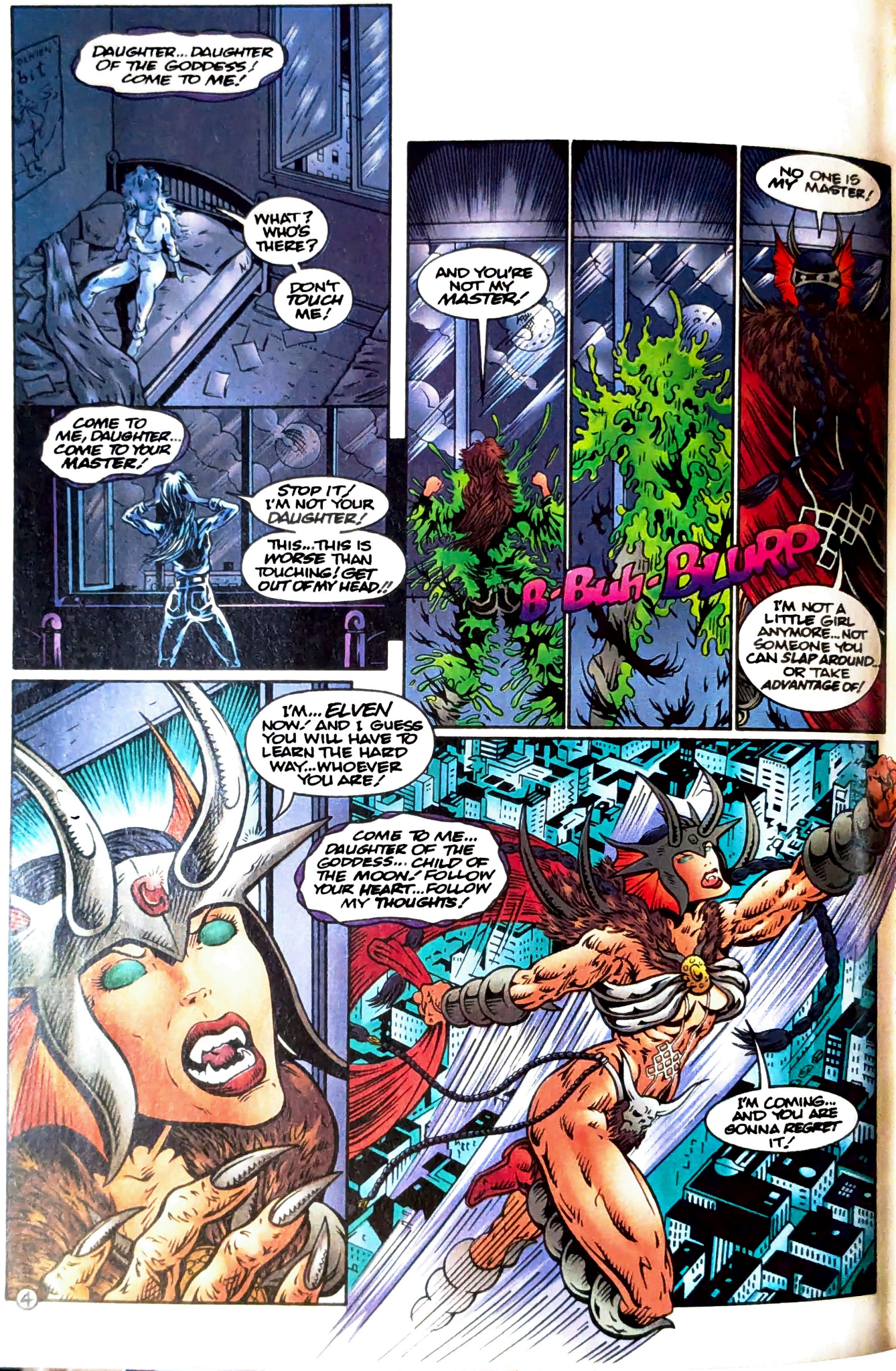
ELVIA, THERE YOU ARE! FATHER TESSARIO GOT ME A JOB INTERVIEW IN WESTWOOD--WITH THE UNIVERSITY!
THAT'S GOOD, I GUESS.


IF I GET THE JOB, WE CAN MOVE OUT AND GET AN APARTMENT! WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE?
I GUESS.

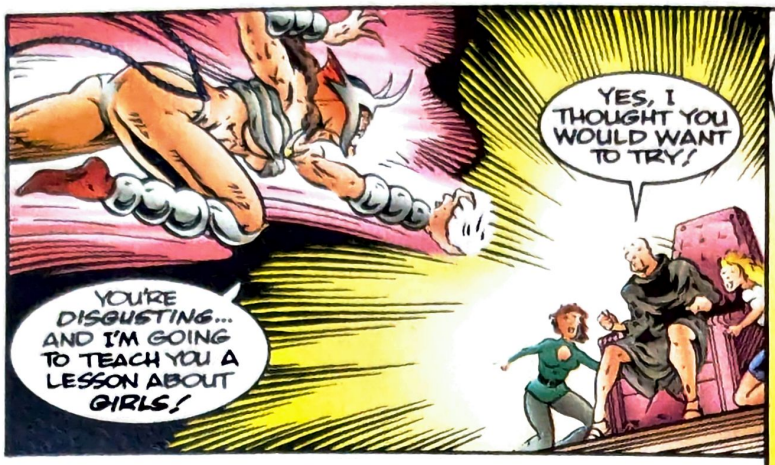
I HAVE TO MEET WITH THE NIGHT LIBRARIAN, SO I'LL BE BACK LATE!
DON'T SPEND ALL EVENING READING THOSE FANTASY NOVELS; GET YOUR HOMEWORK DONE!
OKAY.

WHO CARES?
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
J.R.R. TOLKIEN
Hobbit
NOTHING MATTERS.




DAUGHTER... DAUGHTER OF THE GODDESS! COME TO ME!
WHAT? WHO'S THERE?
DON'T TOUCH ME!
COME TO ME, DAUGHTER... COME TO YOUR MASTER!
STOP IT! I'M NOT YOUR DAUGHTER!
THIS...THIS IS WORSE THAN TOUCHING! GET OUT OF MY HEAD!!
AND YOU'RE NOT MY MASTER!
B-Buh-BLURP
NO ONE IS MY MASTER!
I'M NOT A LITTLE GIRL ANYMORE... NOT SOMEONE YOU CAN SLAP AROUND... OR TAKE ADVANTAGE OF!
I'M... ELVEN NOW! AND I GUESS YOU WILL HAVE TO LEARN THE HARD WAY...WHOEVER YOU ARE!
COME TO ME... DAUGHTER OF THE GODDESS... CHILD OF THE MOON! FOLLOW YOUR HEART...FOLLOW MY THOUGHTS!
I'M COMING... AND YOU ARE GONNA REGRET IT!

YES, YES DAUGHTER! COME CLOSER...COME CLOSER!
OKAY, YOU CALLED ME... AND YOU'RE GONNA GET ME!
AND NOW I KNOW WHO YOU ARE!
CRASSSH
DELACROIX! GET OUT OF MY MIND!
AH, THE LOVELY FEMALE AVENGER! YOU ARE EVERYTHING I IMAGINED... EVERYTHING I SENSED!
AND YOU'VE RESPONDED TO MY INVITATION!
I HEARD YOUR VOICE, ALL RIGHT. BUT ALL IT DID WAS MAKE MY FLESH CRAWL! AND MAKE ME MAD!
NOW WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT?
CRACK
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? I WANT YOU IN MY CHURCH...WHERE YOUR TALENTS CAN BE USED TO BETTER ADVANTAGE!
MY ADVANTAGE!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE WICCA—A WORSHIPPER OF THE EARTH GODDESS! BUT YOU LOOK LIKE JUST ANOTHER PIG TO ME!
OH, YOU MEAN ALL THIS? JUST A LITTLE WINDOW DRESSING, DARLING!
REAL WICCA IS MUCH TOO... SPIRITUAL FOR ME. I DON'T WANT WORSHIP... I WANT TO BE WORSHIPPED!
AND AS YOU SEE, THESE YOUNG WOMEN ARE DOING AN ADMIRABLE JOB...
OOOOH, THAT'S NICE!

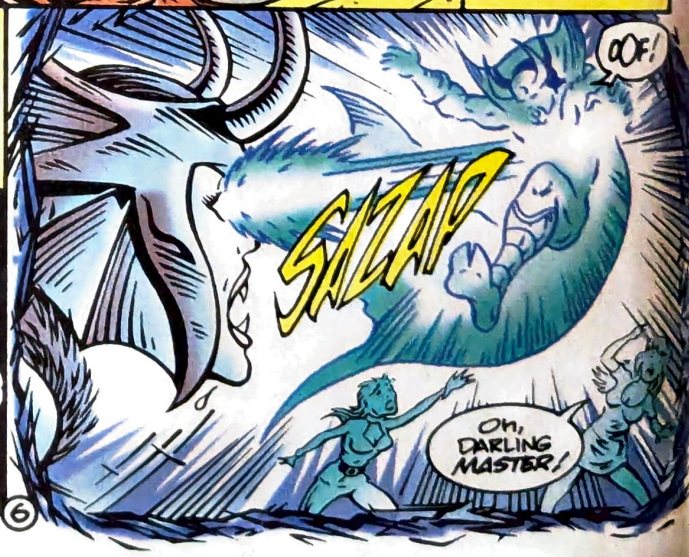

YES, I THOUGHT YOU WOULD WANT TO TRY!
YOU'RE DISGUSTING... AND I'M GOING TO TEACH YOU A LESSON ABOUT GIRLS!

BUT I'M NOT ONE OF THE POOR, SICK PERVERTS YOU LIKE TO BEAT UP! I AM SO MUCH MORE THAN HUMAN!

YE-AAAAHH!
SKOOOSH

ALL OF THIS USED TO BE A FRAUD... LIKE ME! UNTIL A FEW WEEKS AGO DURING THE MOON MADNESS!*
SUDDENLY, I HAD REAL POWER! TO COMMAND... TO CONTROL... TO MAKE MY ILLUSIONS REAL!
I FELT JUMPSTARTED INTO DIVINITY!
Unh... unh... unh! SON OF A...
*SEE BREAK-THRU #'S 1 & 2! -Hank

THINGS WERE GOING PRETTY WELL, UNTIL YOU APPEARED AND BEAT UP ONE OF MY... FLOCK!
JUST KEEP TALKING... WHILE I GET MYSELF TOGETHER... SUMMON UP MY...
HE DESCRIBED YOU TO ME... AND I KNEW I HAD TO HAVE YOU!
...MY ELVEN MAGIC!

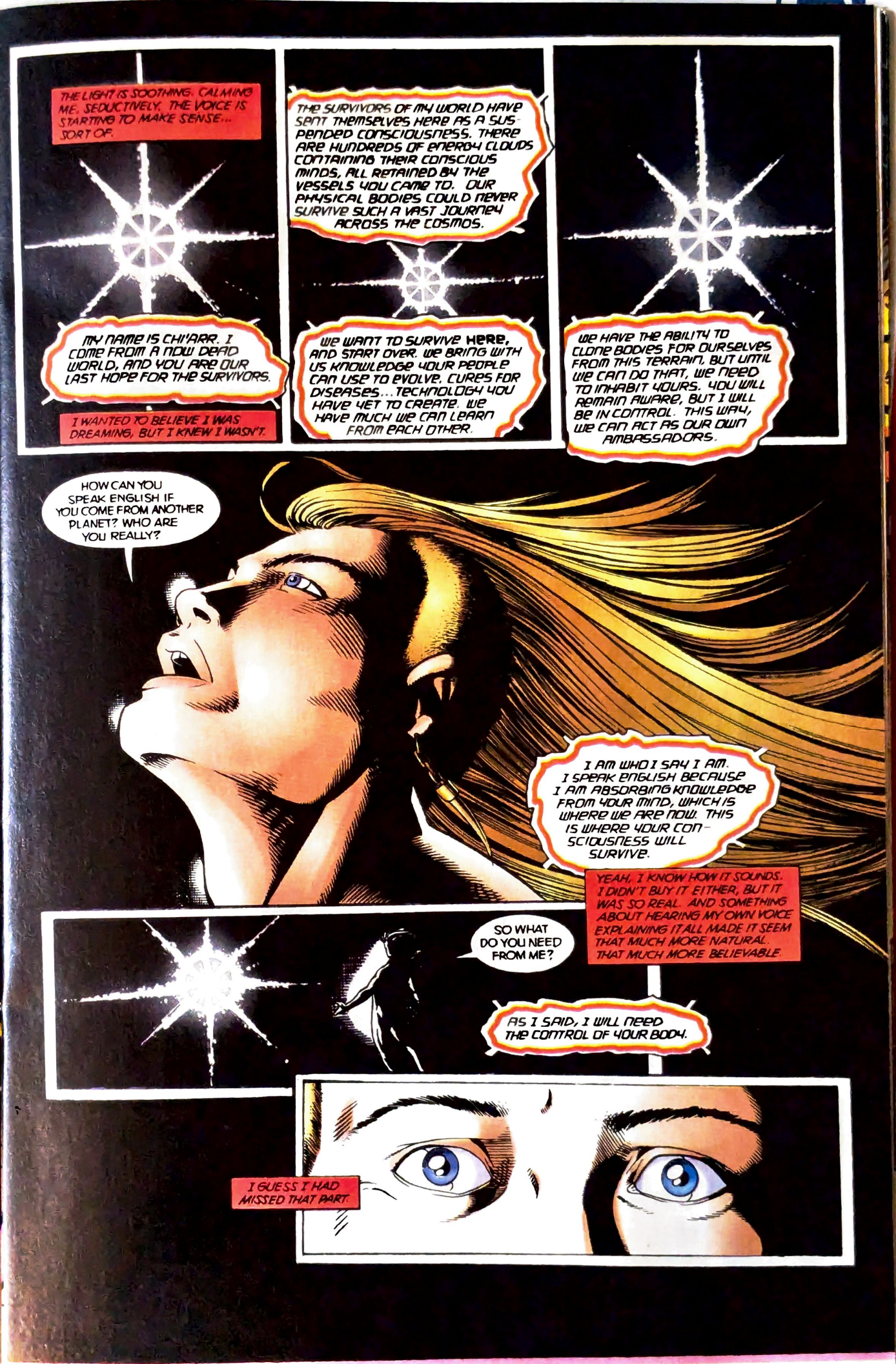

OOF!
SAZAP
Oh, DARLING MASTER!

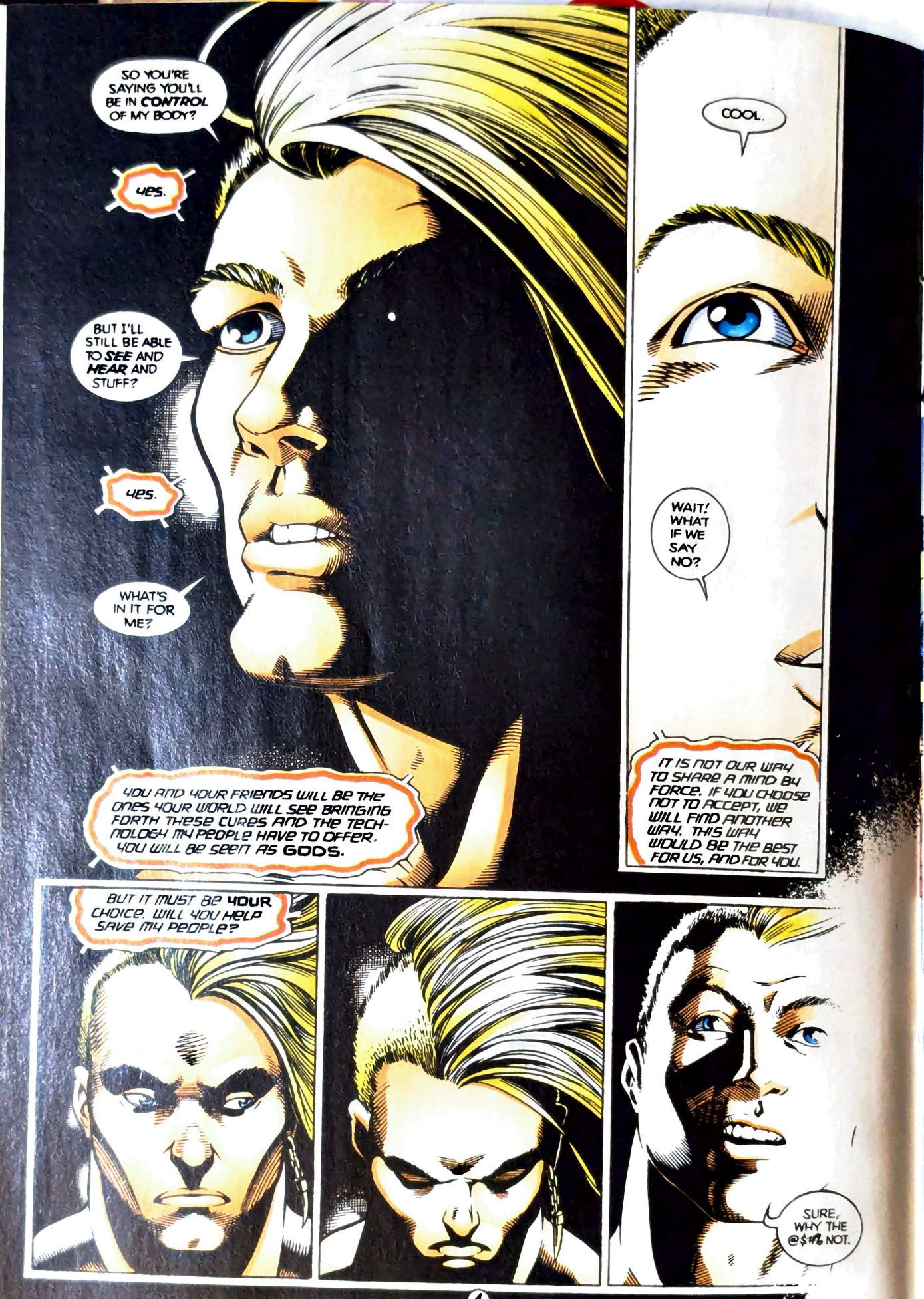
GET AWAY FROM ME, YOU COWS! THIS ONE LIKES IT ROUGH... AND SO DO I!
MY MAGIC... ALWAYS DRAINS ME FOR A MINUTE. GOT TO...
I AM DELACROIX... AND I WILL BE YOUR MASTER... ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!
THWAP
I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOUR POWERS COME FROM... BUT I'M A CHANGELING! I'M NOT SOME WEAK WOMAN.
KRACKLE
I'M AN ELVEN WARRIOR... AND I CAN'T BE BEATEN!
Oh, FOR SURE! THAT'S WORSE THAN MY RAP!
I'M GONNA RIP YOU TO PIECES... AND LEAVE YOU OUT FOR THE RATS!
REALLY, DAUGHTER? LOOK INTO MY EYES AND TELL ME IF I'M AFRAID!
EVEN THE STRONGEST WOMEN... ARE JUST LITTLE GIRLS INSIDE!
LITTLE GIRLS WHO WANT DISCIPLINE FROM THEIR MASTERS!
Oh... Oh NO!
NOW PUT ME DOWN, DARLING. AND ASSUME THE POSITION OF OBEDIENCE!
YES... YES... I WILL.
YOU WILL SERVE MY WILL AND HELP ME BUILD MY REAL CHURCH!
THE FIRST CHURCH OF DELACROIX!

NOW I HAVE A TASK FOR YOU... TO PROVE YOUR LOVE TO ME!
YOU MUST SEEK OUT THIS ONE! THE ONLY ULTRA POWERFUL ENOUGH TO OPPOSE ME!
YOU MUST FIND AND DESTROY...
ULTRA MONTHLY WHO IS PRIME?
YES, MASTER.
...PRIME!
ULTRA WHO IS PRIME?
NEXT: PRIME... AND THE ORIGIN OF ELVEN!

I FEEL THE RAIN.
BRAKA BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA
IT POURS DOWN ON ME... I STARE THROUGH MY EYES, BUT I CAN'T SHUT THEM.
HIAARR!
UVNNT
THERE'S AN ALIEN BEING CONTROLLING MY BODY. I LOANED IT TO HIM AS IF I LET HIM DRIVE MY CAR. NOW I'M A PASSENGER.
I CAN SEE, HEAR AND FEEL EVERYTHING, BUT I CAN'T HIT THE BRAKES.
MY REALITY IS LIKE A NIGHTMARE I CAN'T WAKE UP FROM.
WE'RE BEING HUNTED IN THE ARIZONA DESERT BY THE MILITARY. I'M SURE I'M GOING TO FEEL BULLETS RIP THROUGH ME ANY SECOND.
I FEEL WAVES OF PANIC RISING UP THROUGH A TIDE OF RAGE...
...AND JUST WHEN I FEEL IT ALL BECOMING TOO MUCH...
...JUST WHEN I'VE REACHED MY BREAKING POINT...
...MY REALITY EXPLODES...

...INTO MY PAST.
BACK TO THE BEGINNING.
BEEE... BEEE NOT... UH-AFFRAID
WHAT THE £*¢K? WHAT IS THIS? WHO...
IT ALL WENT BLACK AFTER THE BLINDING LIGHTS FROM THE SHIPS.* THEN I FIND MYSELF IN LIMBO, AND I THINK I'M DEAD. I SEE THE LIGHT IN THE DISTANCE, BUT I DON'T FEEL AT PEACE.
I FEEL TERROR AS SOMEONE TELLS ME TO CALM DOWN, USING MY VOICE.
RUPTURE
GENESIS PART II
"HARD RAIN"
DARICK ROBERTSON • writer/penciller/creator
JON HOLDREDGE • inker
DAVE LANPHEAR • letterer
MOOSE BAUMANN • color designer
FOODHAMMERI • interior colorists
HANK KANALZ • guidance and patience
*SEE UV PREMIERE #1!--Hank.
2


THE LIGHT IS SOOTHING. CALMING ME. SEDUCTIVELY. THE VOICE IS STARTING TO MAKE SENSE... SORT OF.
MY NAME IS CHI'ARR. I COME FROM A NOW DEAD WORLD, AND YOU ARE OUR LAST HOPE FOR THE SURVIVORS.
I WANTED TO BELIEVE I WAS DREAMING, BUT I KNEW I WASN'T.
THE SURVIVORS OF MY WORLD HAVE SENT THEMSELVES HERE AS A SUSPENDED CONSCIOUSNESS. THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF ENERGY CLOUDS CONTAINING THEIR CONSCIOUS MINDS, ALL RETAINED BY THE VESSELS YOU CAME TO. OUR PHYSICAL BODIES COULD NEVER SURVIVE SUCH A VAST JOURNEY ACROSS THE COSMOS.
WE WANT TO SURVIVE HERE, AND START OVER. WE BRING WITH US KNOWLEDGE YOUR PEOPLE CAN USE TO EVOLVE. CURES FOR DISEASES... TECHNOLOGY YOU HAVE YET TO CREATE. WE HAVE MUCH WE CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.
WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO CLONE BODIES FOR OURSELVES FROM THIS TERRAIN, BUT UNTIL WE CAN DO THAT, WE NEED TO INHABIT YOURS. YOU WILL REMAIN AWARE, BUT I WILL BE IN CONTROL. THIS WAY, WE CAN ACT AS OUR OWN AMBASSADORS.
HOW CAN YOU SPEAK ENGLISH IF YOU COME FROM ANOTHER PLANET? WHO ARE YOU REALLY?
I AM WHO I SAY I AM. I SPEAK ENGLISH BECAUSE I AM ABSORBING KNOWLEDGE FROM YOUR MIND, WHICH IS WHERE WE ARE NOW. THIS IS WHERE YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS WILL SURVIVE.
YEAH, I KNOW HOW IT SOUNDS. I DIDN'T BUY IT EITHER, BUT IT WAS SO REAL. AND SOMETHING ABOUT HEARING MY OWN VOICE EXPLAINING IT ALL MADE IT SEEM THAT MUCH MORE NATURAL. THAT MUCH MORE BELIEVABLE.
SO WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME?
AS I SAID, I WILL NEED THE CONTROL OF YOUR BODY.
I GUESS I HAD MISSED THAT PART.


SO YOU'RE SAYING YOU'LL BE IN CONTROL OF MY BODY?
YES.
BUT I'LL STILL BE ABLE TO SEE AND HEAR AND STUFF?
YES.
WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?
YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WILL BE THE ONES YOUR WORLD WILL SEE BRINGING FORTH THESE CURES AND THE TECHNOLOGY MY PEOPLE HAVE TO OFFER. YOU WILL BE SEEN AS GODS.
COOL.
WAIT! WHAT IF WE SAY NO?
IT IS NOT OUR WAY TO SHARE A MIND BY FORCE. IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO ACCEPT, WE WILL FIND ANOTHER WAY. THIS WAY WOULD BE THE BEST FOR US, AND FOR YOU.
BUT IT MUST BE YOUR CHOICE. WILL YOU HELP SAVE MY PEOPLE?
SURE, WHY THE @$#% NOT.

THEN I WAS CONSCIOUS AGAIN. I COULD FEEL EVERYTHING. I COULD FEEL THE GRAINS OF DIRT AND ROCK DIGGING INTO MY PALMS, BUT MY MOVEMENTS WERE NO LONGER MY OWN. I COULD STILL HEAR SPUD SCREAMING AS SHE RAN OVER TO HELP ME.
I WANTED TO TELL HER EVERYTHING WAS ALL RIGHT, THAT WE WERE OKAY... BUT MY MOUTH WOULDN'T RESPOND.
WES? WES?
HEY MAN! MATT! YOU OKAY? TALK TO ME, BUDDY!
JAZZ? YOU IN THERE? JAZZ!
THEN MY TONGUE MOVED, AND MY LIPS PARTED, AND WORDS STARTED FORMING, BUT THEY WEREN'T MINE.
N-NUH-NOT MATT... CHEEARRRR...
I AM CHI'ARR.
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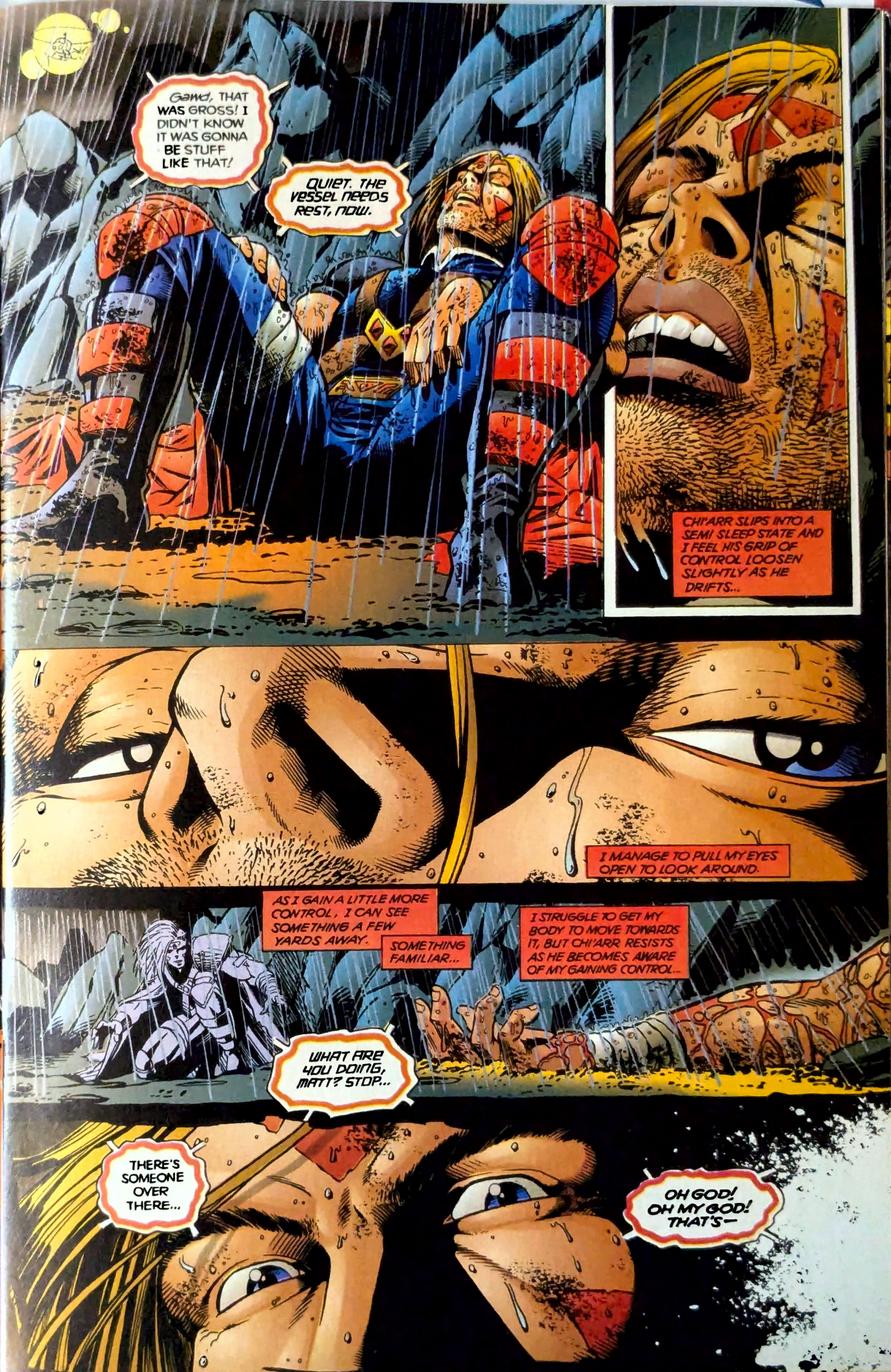
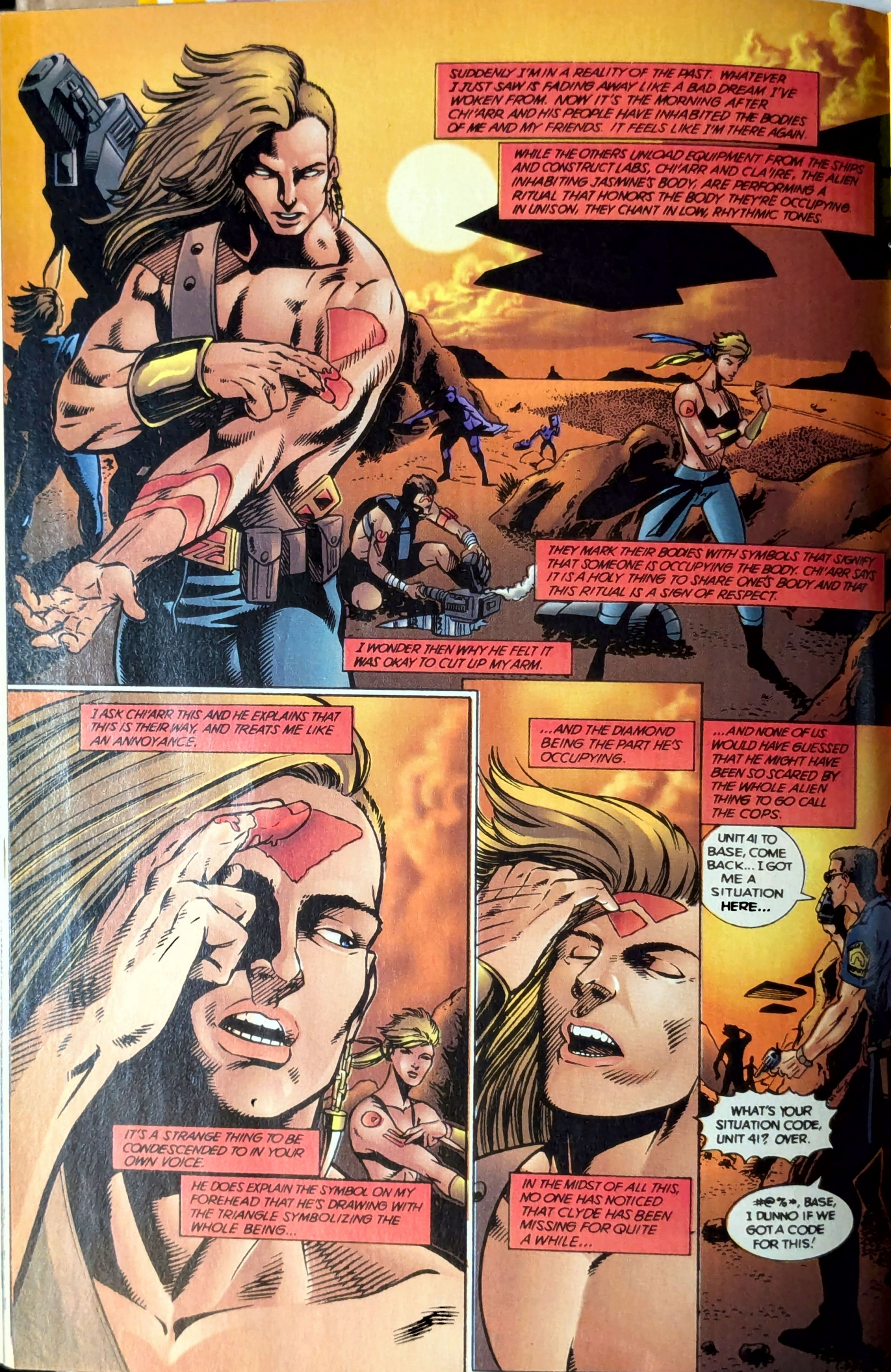
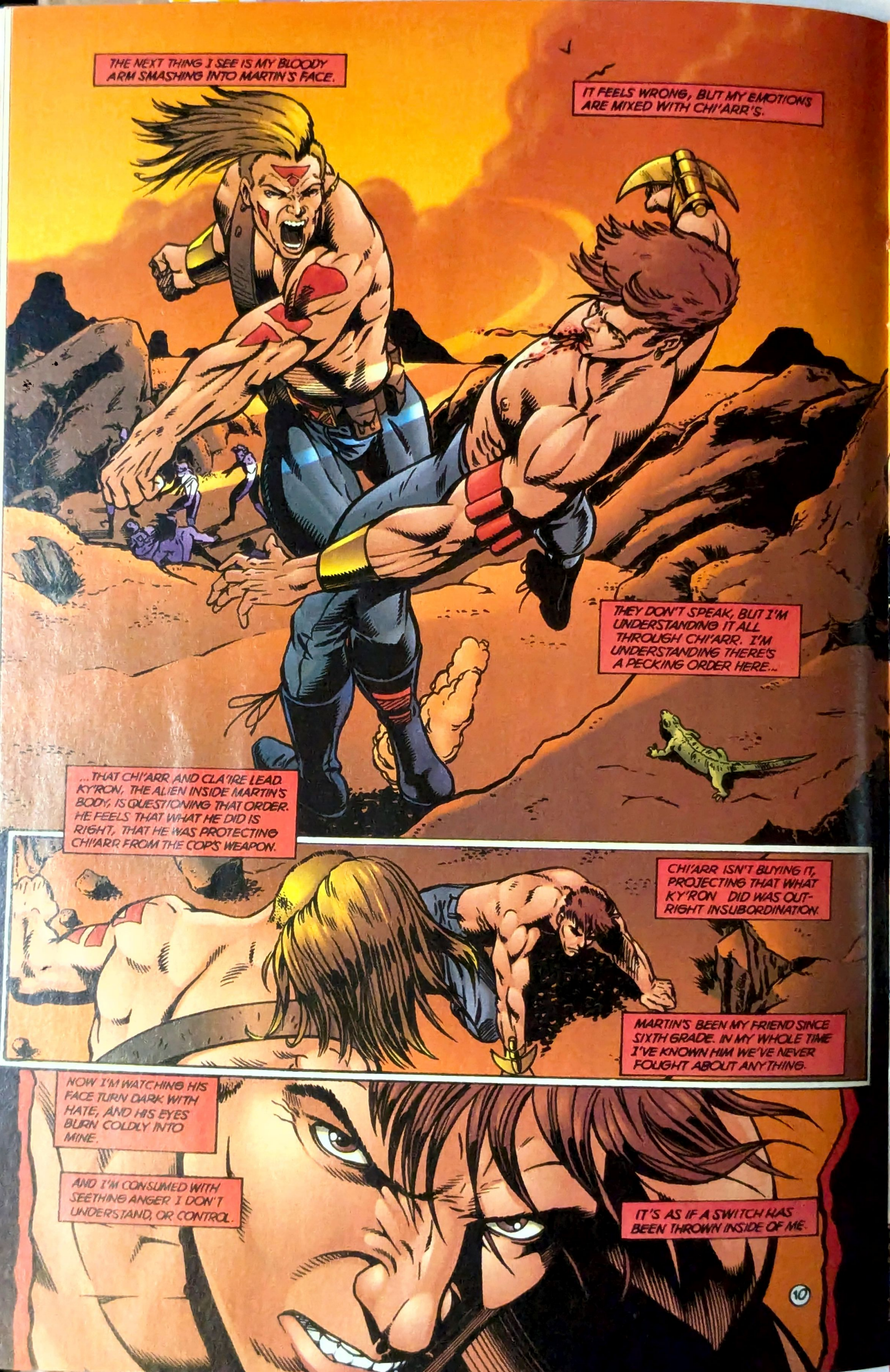
I COULD FEEL THE COLD BEAT OF THE RAIN AS MY EYES FOCUS ON THE PRESENT...
MY BODY IS WEAK FROM HUNGER AND FATIGUE, AND I SENSE CHI'ARR'S DESPERATION.
HE KNOWS THE VESSEL IS DYING...
I CAN TASTE THE HOT, BITTER WETNESS OF THE RAW RABBIT FLESH AS CHIARR GOBBLES IT DOWN...
KRUNCH!
THE EXPERIENCE IS MAKING ME WANT TO GAG, BUT I GUESS HE'S GOT CONTROL OF THOSE FUNCTIONS TOO.
I'M RELIEVED BY THE SWEET COLD RAIN WASHING DOWN MY DRY THROAT.


Gawd, THAT WAS GROSS! I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS GONNA BE STUFF LIKE THAT!
QUIET. THE VESSEL NEEDS REST, NOW.
CHI'ARR SLIPS INTO A SEMI SLEEP STATE AND I FEEL HIS GRIP OF CONTROL LOOSEN SLIGHTLY AS HE DRIFTS...
I MANAGE TO PULL MY EYES OPEN TO LOOK AROUND.
AS I GAIN A LITTLE MORE CONTROL, I CAN SEE SOMETHING A FEW YARDS AWAY.
SOMETHING FAMILIAR...
I STRUGGLE TO GET MY BODY TO MOVE TOWARDS IT, BUT CHI'ARR RESISTS AS HE BECOMES AWARE OF MY GAINING CONTROL...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, MATT? STOP...
THERE'S SOMEONE OVER THERE...
OH GOD! OH MY GOD! THAT'S—


SUDDENLY I'M IN A REALITY OF THE PAST. WHATEVER I JUST SAW IS FADING AWAY LIKE A BAD DREAM I'VE WOKEN FROM. NOW IT'S THE MORNING AFTER CHI'ARR AND HIS PEOPLE HAVE INHABITED THE BODIES OF ME AND MY FRIENDS. IT FEELS LIKE I'M THERE AGAIN.
WHILE THE OTHERS UNLOAD EQUIPMENT FROM THE SHIPS AND CONSTRUCT LABS, CHI'ARR AND CLA'IRE, THE ALIEN INHABITING JASWINE'S BODY, ARE PERFORMING A RITUAL THAT HONORS THE BODY THEY'RE OCCUPYING. IN UNISON, THEY CHANT IN LOW, RHYTHMIC TONES.
THEY MARK THEIR BODIES WITH SYMBOLS THAT SIGNIFY THAT SOMEONE IS OCCUPYING THE BODY. CHI'ARR SAYS IT IS A HOLY THING TO SHARE ONE'S BODY AND THAT THIS RITUAL IS A SIGN OF RESPECT.
I WONDER THEN WHY HE FELT IT WAS OKAY TO CUT UP MY ARM.
I ASK CHI'ARR THIS AND HE EXPLAINS THAT THIS IS THEIR WAY, AND TREATS ME LIKE AN ANNOYANCE.
IT'S A STRANGE THING TO BE CONDESCENDED TO IN YOUR OWN VOICE.
HE DOES EXPLAIN THE SYMBOL ON MY FOREHEAD THAT HE'S DRAWING WITH THE TRIANGLE SYMBOLIZING THE WHOLE BEING...
...AND THE DIAMOND BEING THE PART HE'S OCCUPYING.
IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS, NO ONE HAS NOTICED THAT CLYDE HAS BEEN MISSING FOR QUITE A WHILE...
...AND NONE OF US WOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SO SCARED BY THE WHOLE ALIEN THING TO GO CALL THE COPS.
UNIT 41 TO BASE, COME BACK... I GOT ME A SITUATION HERE...
WHAT'S YOUR SITUATION CODE, UNIT 41? OVER.
#@%*, BASE, I DUNNO IF WE GOT A CODE FOR THIS!

CLA'IRE IS THE FIRST TO NOTICE THE COP. SHE SIGNALS US CALMLY.
I CAN ONLY SENSE CHI'ARR'S EMOTIONS. IT'S THEIR LANGUAGE WITH ONE ANOTHER. NOT SPOKEN WORD, BUT A PROJECTION OF EMOTION AND ATTITUDE.
CHI'ARR APPROACHES THE COP WITH GREAT ANTICIPATION. HE WANTS THIS TO BE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS UNIFICATION.
THERE'S A LOT RIDING ON THIS MOMENT.
ESPECIALLY SINCE THE COP IS SO FREAKED OUT.
OKAY BUDDY, BACK OFF THERE. KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM. I SAID BACK OFF!
UNIT 41! WHAT WAS THAT!? REPORT!
VNNT!
AAAARGH!
I FEEL CHI'ARR'S WHITE HOT RAGE OVERWHELM ME. IT'S MIXED WITH CONFUSION AND PANIC.
9
HE CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT JUST HAPPENED.


THE NEXT THING I SEE IS MY BLOODY ARM SMASHING INTO MARTIN'S FACE.
IT FEELS WRONG, BUT MY EMOTIONS ARE MIXED WITH CHI'ARR'S.
THEY DON'T SPEAK, BUT I'M UNDERSTANDING IT ALL THROUGH CHI'ARR. I'M UNDERSTANDING THERE'S A PECKING ORDER HERE...
...THAT CHI'ARR AND CLA'IRE LEAD. KY'RON, THE ALIEN INSIDE MARTIN'S BODY, IS QUESTIONING THAT ORDER. HE FEELS THAT WHAT HE DID IS RIGHT, THAT HE WAS PROTECTING CHI'ARR FROM THE COP'S WEAPON.
CHI'ARR ISN'T BUYING IT, PROJECTING THAT WHAT KY'RON DID WAS OUT-RIGHT INSUBORDINATION.
MARTIN'S BEEN MY FRIEND SINCE SIXTH GRADE. IN MY WHOLE TIME I'VE KNOWN HIM WE'VE NEVER FOUGHT ABOUT ANYTHING.
NOW I'M WATCHING HIS FACE TURN DARK WITH HATE, AND HIS EYES BURN COLDLY INTO MINE.
AND I'M CONSUMED WITH SEETHING ANGER I DON'T UNDERSTAND, OR CONTROL.
IT'S AS IF A SWITCH HAS BEEN THROWN INSIDE OF ME.

KY'RON HAS ISSUED A CHALLENGE BY QUESTIONING CHI'ARR'S AUTHORITY.
THE TENSION BETWEEN THEM MOUNTS LIKE A TIDAL WAVE RISING OVER ME AS CHI'ARR HOLDS HIS GROUND.
MARTIN'S FACE CONTORTS AND AN INHUMAN SCREAM BELLOWS OUT OF HIM...

AND I SEE ONE OF MY CLOSEST FRIENDS ATTACKING ME. I AM ONLY FILLED WITH THE URGE TO DEFEAT HIM.
THEN AS SUDDENLY AS I WAS THRUST BACK...
I'M PULLED INTO THE PRESENT AGAIN AND I FEEL CHI'ARR'S PANIC AS WE SNAP AWAKE...
THE SOLDIERS HAVE FOUND US.
TO BE CONTINUED
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# FLIPPED and FLOATED

I think we're on a roll!

This issue has Part II of all of our debut features: Ripfire, Warstrike, and Elven. As you know, *Warstrike* debuts in May in his own series, by Dan Danko, Hoang Nguyen, and Bob Downs. If you don't already know, the issue sports a flip cover—one side by Walter Simonson and the other by Nguyen and Terry Austin. And Nguyen and Downs. Okay, the secret's out... there are two versions of the *Warstrike #1* flip cover out there. All three pieces of art used were terrific, so we decided to run them all. (And remember you heard it here first!)

While I wait for the mail to flood in from *Rune#3/ Premiere #1*, I'll let you in on what's coming up in future issues of Premiere! #3, flipped with *Prime #12*, features the conclusion to our Warstrike and Ripfire tales. Prime guest-stars with Elven and gives new meaning to a Sibling Squabble! As an added bonus, we will have a double-page art piece featuring the Freex and Hardcase, illustrated by Hardcase and Freex artists Scott Benefiel, Ben Herrera, and Mike Christian.

*Premiere #4* flips with *The Strangers #13* and concludes the Elven story. We begin the first part of a Prime story, written by Prime co-writer Len Strazewski, and illustrated by the ultra-talented Frank Gomez and Troy Hubbs. Kurt Busiek, recently of *Marvels* fame, pens a solo story for Lady Killer, and *The Strangers #13* concludes the Mantra/Strangers crossover that started in Mantra #12. Whew! And if that wasn't enough, British talents Bryan Hitch and Andrew Lanning provide a fantastic Hardcase and Choice art spread.

Like I said, I think we're on a roll! Be sure to write in and let us know what features you like and what you'd like to see happen within these pages!

See you next time!

**Hank Kanalz**
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